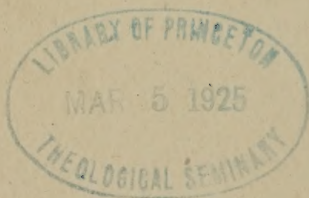




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Mores Catholici:

OR,

AGES OF FAITH.

[*Kenneth H. Digby*]

BOOK I.



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MORES CATHOLICI;

OR,

AGES OF FAITH.

THE FIRST BOOK.

CHAP. I.

IN the third stage of this mortal course, if midway be the sixth, and on the joyful day which hears of the great crowd that no man could number, I found me in the cloister of an abbey, whither I had come to seek the grace of that high festival. The hour was day's decline; and already had "Placebo Dominum" been sung in solemn tones, to usher in the hours of special charity for those who are of the suffering Church. A harsh sound from the simultaneous closing of as many books, cased in oak and iron, as there were voices in that full choir, like a sudden thunder-crash, announced the end of that ghostly vesper. The saintly men one by one slowly walked forth, each proceeding to his special exercise. Door then shutting after door gave long echoes, till all was mute stillness, and I was left alone under cloistered arches, to meditate on the felicity of blessed spirits, and on the desire which presses both the living and the inmates of the region in which the soul is purged from sinful stain, to join their happy company. Still methought I heard them sing of the bright and puissant angel ascending from the rising

of the sun, and of the twelve times twelve thousand that were signed ; and of the redeemed from every nation and people and language ; and of the angels who stood around the throne in Heaven. It seemed now as if I heard a voice like that which said to Dante, “ What thou heardest was sung, that freely thou mightest open thy heart to the waters of peace, that flow diffused from their eternal fountain.” What man is there so brutish and senseless to things divine, as not to have sometimes experienced an interval like that which is described by him who sung of Paradise, to whom the world appeared as if stretched far below his feet, and who saw this globe,

So pitiful of semblance, that perforce
 It mov'd his smiles ; and him in truth did hold
 For wisest, who esteems it least ; whose thoughts
 Elsewhere are fix'd, him worthiest call'd and best * ?

But soon the strained sense will sink back to it ; for the human spirit must perforce accomplish in the first place its exercise in that school which is to prepare it for the home that it anticipates above. Yet I fell not disconsolate, nor forgetful, of the bright vision. My thoughts were carried backwards to ages which the muse of history had taught me long to love ; for it was in the obscure and lowly middle-time of saintly annals that multitudes of these bright spirits took their flight from a dark world to the Heavens. The middle ages, then I said, were ages of highest grace to men ; ages of faith ; ages when all Europe was Catholic ; when vast temples were seen to rise in every place of human concourse to give glory to God, and to exalt men's souls to sanctity ; when houses of holy peace and order were found amidst woods and desolate mountains, on the banks of placid lakes as well as on the solitary rocks in the ocean :

* Carey's Dante.

ages of sanctity which witnessed a Bede, an Alcuin, a Bernard, a Francis, and crowds who followed them as they did Christ: ages of vast and beneficent intelligence, in which it pleased the Holy Spirit to display the power of the seven gifts, in the lives of an Anselm, a Thomas of Aquinum, and the saintly flock whose steps a cloister guarded: ages of the highest civil virtue; which gave birth to the laws and institutions of an Edward, a Lewis, a Suger: ages of the noblest art, which beheld a Giotto, a Michael Angelo, a Raffaello, a Dominichino: ages of poetry, which heard an Avitus, a Caedmon, a Dante, a Shakspeare, a Calderon: ages of more than mortal heroism, which produced a Tancred, and a Godfrey: ages of majesty which knew a Charlemagne, an Alfred, and the sainted youth who bore the lily: ages too of England's glory, when she appears not even excluding a comparison with the eastern empire, as the most truly civilized country on the globe; when the Sovereign of the greater portion of the western world applied to her schools for instructors; when she sends forth her saints to evangelise the nations of the north, and to diffuse spiritual treasure over the whole world; when heroes flock to her courts to behold the models of reproachless chivalry, and Emperors leave their thrones to adore God at the tombs of her martyrs! as Dante says,

No tongue
So vast a theme could equal, speech and thought
Both impotent alike.

In a little work which embodied the reflections, the hopes, and even the joys, of youthful prime, I once attempted to survey the middle ages in relation to chivalry; and though in this we had occasion to visit the cloister, and to hear as a stranger who tarries but a night the counsels of the wise and holy, we never were able to regard the house of peace as

our home ; we were soon called away from it to return to the world and to the courts of its Princes. Now I propose to commence a course which is more peaceful and unpretending, for it only supposes that one has left the world, and withdrawn from these vain phantoms of honour, and of glory, which distract so often the morning of man's day. Thus we read that in youth many have left the cloister, dazzled by the pomp and circumstances of a wild, delusive chivalry, who after a little while have hastened back to it, moved by a sense of earthly vanity, there

To finish the short pilgrimage of life,
Still speeding to its close on restless wing*.

Yes, all is vanity but to love and serve God ! Men have found by long experience that nothing but divine love can satisfy that restless craving which ever holds the soul, " finding no food on earth : " that every beauty, every treasure, every joy, must, by the law which rules contingency, vanish like a dream ! and that there will remain for every man sooner or later, the gloom of a dark and chaotic night, if he is not provided with the lamp of faith. Those men, who, reasoning, went to depth profoundest, came to the same conclusion ; they found that the labours of the learned and the visions of the poet were not of their own nature different in this respect, from the pleasures of sense :

'Tis darkness all ; or shadow of the flesh,
Or else it's poison.

This was their experience. That labour of the mind, or that fond ideal extasy, did not necessarily secure the one thing needful, the love of Jesus. In a vast number of instances it led to no substantial good ;

* Dante, Purg. XX.

its object was soon forgotten, or the mind recurred to the performance with a sense of its imperfections. Still the heart cried, Something more! What said they can be given to it? What will content it? Fresh labour? fresh objects? Ah, they had already begun to suspect how little all this would avail; for in hearkening to "the saintly soul, that shews the world's deceitfulness to all who hear him," they had learned to know that it might indeed be given to their weakness to feel the cruel discord, but not to set it right; to know that it was but a vain delusive motive which would excite them to exertion from a desire of pleasing men; for men pass rapidly with the changing scene of life, and the poor youth who mistaking the true end of human labour, had fondly reckoned upon long interchange of respect and friendship, at the moment when his hopes are the brightest and his affections warmed into extasy, wakens suddenly from his sweet protracted dream, and finds himself without honour, without love, without even a remembrance, and virtually in as great solitude as if he were already in his grave! Well might they shudder at the thought of this eternal chillness, this spiritual isolation, this bitter and unholy state! Truly it was fearful, and something too much for tears! Sweet Jesus, how different would have been their state if they had sought only to love and serve thee! for thy love alone can give rest and comfort to the heart, a sure and lasting joy:—

other good
 There is, where man finds not his happiness;
 It is not true fruition; not that blest
 Essence of every good, the branch and root.

Changed then be the way and object of our research, and let the converse to that which formerly took place hold respecting our employment here; and if we shall again meet with knights and the world's

chivalry, let it be only in the way of accident, and as it were from the visit of those who pass near our spot of shelter, and let our place of rest from henceforth be in the forest and the cell. Times there are when even the least wise can seize a constant truth, that the heart must be devoted either all to the world, or all to God. When they too will pray, and make supplications urged with weeping, that the latter may be their condition in the mortal hour, that they may secure the rest of the saints for eternity.

Returning to that cloisteral meditation, how many, thought I, throughout the whole world have heard this day the grounds and the consummation of the saint's felicity! how many have been summoned onward! and told that the steps were near, and that now the ascent might be without difficulty gained? and yet,

A scanty few are they, who, when they hear
Such tidings, hasten. O ye race of men!
Though born to soar, why suffer ye a wind
So slight to baffle ye * ?

But for those who seemed to feel how sweet was that solemn accent, eight times sung, which taught them who were blessed! would it not be well, when left alone, and without distraction, if they were to take up histories and survey the course which has been trod by saintly feet, and mark, as if from the soul-purifying mount, the ways and works of men on earth, keeping their eyes with fixed observance bent upon the symbol there conveyed, so as to mark how far the form and acts of that life, in ages past, of which there are still so many monuments around them, agreed, not with this or that modern standard of political and social happiness and grandeur, but with what by heaven's suffrance gives title to divine and

* DANTE, Parad. XII. Carey's transl.

everlasting beatitude? Such a view would present a varied and immense horizon, comprising the manners, institutions, and spirit of many generations of men long gone by: we should see in what manner the whole type and form of life were Christian, although its detail may have been often broken and disordered; for instance, how the pursuits of the learned, the consolations of the poor, the riches of the Church, the exercises and dispositions of the young, and the common hope and consolation of all men, harmonized with the character of those that sought to be poor in spirit; how again, the principle of obedience, the constitution of the Church, the division of ministration, and the rule of government, the manners and institutions of society, agreed with meekness and inherited its recompense; further, how the sufferings of just men, and the provisions for a penitential spirit were in accordance with the state of those that were to mourn and weep, then how the character of men in sacred order, the zeal of the laity, and the lives of all ranks, denoted the hunger and thirst after justice: again, how the institutions, the foundations, and the recognized principle of perfection proclaimed men merciful: moreover, how the philosophy which prevailed, and the spiritual monuments which were raised by piety and genius, evinced the clean of heart; still further, how the union of nations, and the bond of peace which existed even amidst savage discord, wars, and confusion; as also how the holy retreats for innocence which then every where abounded, marked the multitude of pacific men: and, finally, how the advantage taken of dire events, and the acts of saintly and heroic fame, revealed the spirit which shunned not suffering for sake of justice.

But very lately a distinguished professor in the Academy of Paris, admitted, in the course of his lessons upon history, that it would be in vain to deny

the present tendency of the public mind to recur with pleasure to the traditions, manners, and monuments of the middle age. He proceeded to point out the advantage of nourishing that taste for the poetical history of his country, which would result from mere historical impartiality. "Is it not something," he asked, "to have a new source of emotions and pleasure opened to the imagination of men? All this long period, all this old history, where men used to see nothing but absurdity and barbarism, becomes rich for us in grand memorials, noble events, and sentiments which inspire the most lively interest. It is a domain restored to those who feel that need of emotion and sympathy which nothing can stifle in our nature. Imagination plays an immense part in the life of men and of nations. To occupy it, to satisfy it, there must be either an actual and energetic passion, like that which animated the eighteenth century, and the revolution, or else a rich and varied spectacle of remembrance; the present alone, the present, passionless, calm and regular, cannot suffice to the human soul. Hence the importance and the charm of the past, of those national traditions, and of all that part of the life of nations, when the imagination can wander through a space far wider than the limits of real life. The school of the eighteenth century was guilty, more than once, of this error, in not understanding the part which the imagination performs in the life of men and of society. It attacked and decried all that was ancient, and all that was eternal—history and religion—that is to say, it wished to rob men of the past and the future, to concentrate them in the present;" so that, conversely to what was prescribed by the Church, they should neither "meditate on the days of old, nor have in mind the eternal years."

The justice of this estimate of the present tendency of men's thoughts, would also be admitted by Lamar-

tine ; who, however, it must be remembered, is the poet of hope—for he has said that Dante is the poet of our epoque. But however this may be, it is impossible to deny that, even to men of secular learning, there is an immense source of interest and admiration, connected with their own studies, in the history of the middle ages ; for all the discoveries to which the present race of men owe their superiority in those material acquirements, of which they are so proud, date from these ten centuries, which are accused of intellectual apathy, barbarism, and ignorance. Then it was, says a French writer, that a new spirit was breathed into the ancient world—all social relations were changed—vassalage, a kind of modified servitude, prepared the way for the abolition of slavery. The principle of association began to operate ; corporations were formed. The stage of life presents great personages and sublime actions. Deeds of eternal fame were done ; deeds which tell of Charlemagne, Philip Augustus, and St. Louis ; Alfred and Canute ; Richard the Lion-hearted, and the Black Prince : Gerbert and Hildebrand ; Alcuin, Bede, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon. What names ! what men ! Who is not seized with astonishment at beholding the architectural monuments of these ages ? such as the Gothic vaults of Cologne and Westminster, of Amiens and Jumièges, which had been preceded by others, the destruction of which had made men weep ! Then too hospitals arose for the first time, asylums for all kinds of human misery, and innumerable establishments for the poor. Would we enter into still lower details, it was in the eighth century that paper was invented : in the tenth that the monks invented clocks ; in the eleventh that the Benedictines raised the first windmills ; and that a citizen of Middlebourg invented the telescope. In the same age was disclosed the loadstone, or the polarity of the needle,

though there is a still earlier mention of it in the Romance of the Rose: and, during this period, the greatest problems of mechanics were defined. Linnæus even shews the successful labours of the monks in the cultivation of useful plants and vegetables, many of which were now, for the first time, introduced into Europe. Engraving dates from the fourteenth century, when a multitude of arts were invented, which in these times seem indispensable to domestic life. So that, upon the whole, judging merely upon these principles, no ten other ages can be produced, which had results of greater importance, and contributed more to the happiness of mankind.

Frederick Schlegel divides the middle and later ages into the scholastic-romantic, which was a period essentially Christian, notwithstanding the horrors which occasionally appear in history; for from these Christianity never promised to free the world; then the heathen-antiquarian, the spirit of which extended to literature and to political theories; and then the barbaro-polemic, which included the seventeenth century*. When we speak of the middle ages as barbarous, we should be understood, he says, as referring to this latter period, which was really barbarous, which was distinguished by the change of religion, and the religious wars†. To the first of these periods, the learned Danish Professor Grundtvig alludes, saying, in particular reference to England, "the fact that there once existed a civilized world, limited to the shores of the Mediterranean sea, is not more unquestionable than that a new one arose out of the chaos of those barbarous tribes, who destroyed the western empire." Indeed, the most superficial reader must have occasionally been struck at the startling manner in which the charges,

* Philosophie der Geschichte, II. 190.

† Ibid. 214.

so generally brought against these times of grossness and absurdity, are often disproved. Thus a French critic of our time, speaking of Petrarcha, says, "How can we convey an idea of that form of imagination, perhaps too delicate for us, though it dates from the middle age?" "In these ages, called dark," says St.-Victor, "men possessed every one of these maxims, founded on good sense and morality, which belong to the most civilized society of these times*." But it is in their character of Christian and holy ages, that, in accordance with the proposed course, we are invited to consider them: and here a far richer prospect will be found to open before us. Thus the seventh century was, to the eye of Mabillon, a golden age, in which men of the greatest innocence and sanctity spread the rule of St. Benedict to the farthest regions of Europe; "for the truth of Christ did not preach that only wise and learned men were the salt of the earth and light of the world, but also included under that title holy men who opposed the salt of integrity and the light of justice to corrupt manners and darkened minds†." Neander points out a new path to lead us through the labyrinth of history, where he says that "it is impossible to despise an age, over which a man like St. Bernard was able to exercise such an influence, by the sole empire of his character and of his sanctity‡." From a multitude of remarks of this kind, founded upon facts which cannot be questioned, we should be led to take a very uncommon, though judicious view, of this period. The ancient chronicle of Ely affirms of the time when the blessed Ædelwold rebuilt that monastery, "These were golden ages of the world, when pure faith, peace,

* Tableau de Paris, Tom. I. 353.

† Præfat. in II. Sæculum Benedict.

‡ Der heilige Bernhard und sein Zeitalter. Berlin, 181.

and true love, flourished. Fraud, pride, and perjury, were unknown. Then liberty had for itself sure seats.

Tunc et libertas sedes habuit sibi certas.

Then Martha and Mary shone equally in the Church*." Sentences of this kind may indeed be commonly received with a certain degree of abatement, from ascribing something to the rhetorical tone which pervades them; but in the present instance the writer describes a period not greatly remote from his time, and of which the most exact tradition must have reached him. He does not make the remark angrily, for the sake of contrast, but in order to edify and stimulate his contemporaries, who, let it be observed, considered these evangelical qualities, which he ascribed to their fathers, as the highest virtue for which a nation or an age could be illustrious. Throughout all this long period, there would have been nothing startling or questionable in a proposition like that which was assumed by St. Ambrose in writing to the Emperor Valentinian, when he said, "This is worthy of your times, that is, of Christian times †." Men would not have been instantly struck with an intimate sense that a falsehood was proposed to them. Still, indeed, was fulfilled the sentence of infallible wisdom, that the world cannot receive the spirit of truth ‡: but so was also fulfilled the divine prediction respecting the kings and princes of the earth. The Christians were sufficiently numerous and powerful to imprint a character upon society, to protect the institutions of meek and holy men, and to sanctify the whole form of the political state, by founding it upon the principles of revealed wisdom.

Such a view of history, I am aware, is widely different from that which is generally proposed by

* Hist. Eliensis apud Gale, Hist. Brit. Tom. III.

† Epist. XXX.

‡ John XIV.

modern writers, who follow one another in representing these ages as a period of the greatest misery and degradation: but before their testimony is received, would it not be of some importance to ascertain whether their opinions respecting misery and degradation agree with those which must necessarily be entertained by Christians; because, if it should prove the case, that what they regard as misery is happiness in a Christian sense, and that their standard of happiness is that of evil in the same, it would only follow from their censure, that there is an additional evidence in favour of our proposition respecting the peculiarly Christian character of these ages! Now, in fact, this would be the result from such an enquiry. For if we consult these teachers of the modern wisdom, who are so full of vile disdain for Christian antiquity; and if we consider what are the ends proposed in their speculations respecting political and domestic economy, and national happiness, we shall find that they are all foreign from those which are comprised in the beatitudes; that in many instances they are exactly opposed to them; and that, in fine, that terrible *væ* is pronounced by truth itself upon those who attain to their standard of excellence. To be rich, to be filled, or in the phrase of the economists, to have capital, to secure a life of luxury, ease, and dissipation; to be praised and extolled by men; to be the first in rank; to raise oneself to an eminent situation; what, they ask, is more lawful than to desire this? Well—woe to all who attain to this, says Christ*. Now, it is from this celestial wisdom, opposed to that of these modern sophists, that the principles of action were formed, which were admitted and recognised during these ages, of which I shall soon attempt to unfold the moral history. I shall not fear to be contradicted

* Luke VI.

in stating, that during that period religion, with all the apparently new and remarkable peculiarities of the doctrine of Christ, was uppermost in the thoughts of men, and even adopted universally as the basis of civil government, and of their whole domestic customs and manners : the justice of which proposition is so certain, that Guizot could not avoid observing that “ the religious society played a grand part in the history of modern civilization.” So that, in fact, notwithstanding the number of evils and abuses which then prevailed, in consequence of human passions, these entire ages might be described in the words of the great Apostle, as exhibiting themselves to our view ;—“ In much patience and tribulation, by glory and dishonour, by evil fame and good fame, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things :”—words, which might be received as almost a literal description of the precise interval which the moderns have affirmed to be the darkest in the annals of mankind. For, as the learned author of the “ *Perpétuité de la Foi*” says of the tenth century, which even Baronius himself was tempted to concede to them, from limiting his view to one country,—“ we must conclude that this tenth age, vulgarly so reviled, was one of the most fortunate times of the church, since the vices which are ascribed to that age, are common to it with others ; whereas the fact is otherwise respecting the good which recommends it.” He proves this position by shewing, that there flourished then, in various parts of the Western Church, a multitude of bishops, eminently illustrious for piety and sound doctrine : many theologians, deeply versed in ecclesiastical matters ; many holy men, who restored decayed discipline in monasteries ; and many princes, of eminent and saintly virtue. But above all, he observes, that it was in this century that the Danes, Bohemians, Poles, Hungarians, Normans, and other

people, were converted to the Christian faith by the labours of holy missionaries: facts which sufficiently clear it from the charge of ignorance, superstition, and corruption*;" and which could hardly be summed up in more precise language than that used by St. Paul, in alluding to the qualities which should belong to the apostolic character. The truth is, from a fixed law and a principle inherent in nature, which the reason of Plato was able to expose clearly, it is with nations and with whole ages as with men individually—their energies must be devoted either to religion or to the world; they must adopt the views and perform the service of either the one or the other; and on their choice depends the whole order of life, and all that gives a character and peculiar expression to their spirit, manners, customs, and institutions.

As the subject which is here to be proposed, is full of interest, so is it one that may be applied to the most important purposes of life. There was a book in the middle ages called "*Universale bonum*." This was nothing but a collection of edifying accounts of holy men, and, if we reflect upon the great end of all education, and the admirable force of examples in the instruction of ingenuous minds, it must be admitted, that the author evinced excellent judgment in choosing that title. It is to the effects of such a study, that a modern poet seems to allude, in saying:—

a man so bred,
(Take from him what you will upon the score
Of ignorance or illusion,) lives and breathes
For nobler purposes of mind: his heart
Beats to the heroic song of ancient days †.

As to instruction by examples generally, its im-

* *Perpétuité de la Foi*, Tom. I. part iii. c. 6, 7.

† *The Excursion*.

portance has always been felt by wise men. Quintilian thought it of essential use, that boys should even learn by heart the sayings of the illustrious men *, with whose lives they were to be familiar. St. Augustin says, that men can more easily follow things themselves, than the precepts and discipline of those who would teach them in a scientific manner; that if any one were to give lessons in walking, he would have to specify many things which men would not so easily learn from him, as they would practise them without his instruction; and that generally the spectacle of truth itself more delights and assists us, than the process by which rhetoricians would teach it. "Perchance, indeed," he adds, "such exercises may render the mind more expert, though they may also render it more malignant and inflated †." "The philosopher sitting down with thorny arguments, the bare rule is so hard of utterance, and so misty to be conceived, that one that hath no other guide but him shall wade in him, until he be old before he shall find sufficient cause to be honest; but as for the poet," continues Sir Philip Sidney, "he cometh with a tale, forsooth he cometh unto you with a tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney corner ‡." Moreover, books, especially those connected with history, instruct the great when no one but flatterers can approach them. Books instruct and wound not. Therefore Don Alphonzo, king of Arragon, being once asked who were the best counsellors, replied,—“The dead, (meaning books,) because we learn easily from them what we wish to know §.” But above all, it is to Christians that a study of this kind is most important and delightful.

* Instit. Lib. I. II.

† De Doctrin. Christ. Lib. II. chap. 37.

‡ Defence of Poesy.

§ Aeneas Sylvius de dictis Regis Alphonsi.

“*Quidnam dulcius*,” as William of Malmesbury says, “*quam majorum recensere gratiam ut eorum acta cognoscas, à quibus acceperis et rudimenta fidei et incitamenta bene vivendi*?*” “Who would not wish to know,” says a learned Dane, who has directed his studies to Anglo-Saxon literature; “Who would not wish to know how those patriarchs of the new Christian world preached and reasoned, what lessons they taught, what examples they referred to, in what manner they attuned the minds of their heathen converts to the doctrines they communicated, whether these doctrines were instilled in humble prose, or, to gain their holy ends, they thought it needful to build the lofty rhyme, or called in the aid of music, married to immortal verse?” And, to draw a reflection still more immediately suggested by what is passing around us, which will lead us to the same result, by shewing that which is opposed to the experience of such studies, what is it which renders the minds of many of the moderns, among whom assuredly is many a soul of mighty worth, so gloomy and apprehensive; why do they appear at times so lonely and disconsolate, amidst the wastes of their interminable speculations, afflicted like those spirits seen by Dante, who lived “desiring without hope,” variable as if they felt utterly lost on the way, journeying on, and knowing not whither, as if they had no track of any that had gone before to guide their feet, no prospect of rejoining any, with whom the thought of meeting might cheer their present path; looking backwards to ages gone by with disdain, and forwards to the future with dismay, if it be not that the magnificent chain of Christian history and ecclesiastical tradition has been broken to them, and that notwithstanding the outward professions which may be made in reliance

* *De Gestis Pontif. Anglorum. Prolog.*

upon the resources of genius and learning, they inwardly feel the impossibility of forming, with the broken fragments thrown to them by mere poetic fancy or literary taste, that happy clue which might lead them through the labyrinth of life to a peaceful and joyous end.

In all ages of the world, religion has had regard to history. Dionysius says, that with the Romans there was no ancient historian or writer of legends, who did not compose his work from ancient narrations which were preserved on sacred tablets*. And Plutarch, in his treatise on the means of perceiving the progress made in virtue, makes allusion to the effects of its moral application, saying that there is no more effectual mode of advancing in virtue, than for a person to have always before his eyes those who are, or have been good men, and to say to himself, "What would Plato have done in this case? What would Lycurgus or Agesilaus have said?" "But with Christians," as Voigt observes, "there is no knowledge so holily connected with religion as history†." They are of the number of those of whom it is written, that "their hearts live in all the generations of ages‡." It is a divine precept which the Church sings at lauds of Saturday, "*Memento dierum antiquorum: cogita generationes singulas.*"

The facts which shew the consequence of neglecting this counsel are most striking. Thus we behold men who seem to know the whole Bible by heart, without appearing to be conscious of the inconsistency of modern manners and modern ways of thinking with what is required of all that would follow Christ; for though they read what the duty is, it exists only in their mind as a grand abstraction,

* Dion. Halicar. Lib. I. cap. 73.

† Voigt. Hildebrand und sein Zeitalter vorrede.

‡ Psalm xxi. 27.

because they never see in what way men can actually reduce it to practice, under the real circumstances of life. Still less have they a desire to imitate that perfection which they regard as a thing beyond their reach, and without the wish to do so, as St. Chrysostom says, in his treatise on compunction, it would not have been possible even for the saints to have led the life of angels as they did. "The wish of these men," as John à Kempis, the brother of Thomas, used to say, "is that they may be humble but without being looked down upon, patient but without suffering, obedient but without restraint, poor but without wanting any thing, penitent, but without sorrow*." They are, in fact, perfectly reconciled to themselves, by concluding that one command was only figurative, and another solely applicable to the times of the apostles, and that others could not be performed without incurring the charge of extravagance and fanaticism. Such persons are always found to turn in unutterable disgust from the lives of the saints, and the books which describe the holiness of antiquity; they affirm that they will never read these books, adding, with unguarded sincerity, that it gives them painful emotions to look into them; and, in fact, they go away from them sorrowful, like the young man who left Christ, and not only from the same unwillingness to comply, but also from being forced to see that there were others better than themselves; and this discovery is painful to that latent pride which desires to be singular even in goodness. Besides, they are taught to believe that faith was lost in the middle ages, and that they are the best judges of what should be the form and course of a Christian life. Whereas, other men, by merely turning to the old Christians, are filled with a desire to follow them.

* Joan. Buschius de Vir. Illust. cap. 32.

And their most righteous customs make them scorn
All creeds besides.

Then they hear themselves addressed as if by the
poet of Christians :—

————— Why dost thou not turn
Unto the beautiful garden, blossoming
Beneath the rays of Christ? Here is the rose
Wherein the Word divine was made incarnate,
And here the lilies, by whose odour known
The way of life was followed *.

Father Mabillon says, in his *Treatise on Monastic Studies*, that one of the greatest geniuses of that age, who had been born in heresy, was converted to the Church by means of studying ecclesiastical history †.

Needful to all, we may observe, that to those engaged in what Lord Bacon calls the narrow and confined walks of natural science, this study is especially important; for such persons, in tracing the history of natural philosophy, become accustomed to reflect upon the errors of men in successive ages, the absurd fancies which were discarded for opinions that following ages deemed equally fanciful, and thus they gradually and unknowingly become incapable of believing in the constant transmission of the same religious truths through a long lapse of ages, of which certain fact, an acquaintance with the learning and customs of Christian ages would have convinced them.

On the use of historical study to theologians, in order to supply them with arguments, and examples, and means of avoiding error as to popular or vulgar reports, Melchior Canus discourses at large ‡. But that I may not seem presumptuously to offer information to those from whom it would become me

* Hell. xxiii.

† *Traites des Etudes Monastiques*, Part II. chap. 8.

‡ *De Locis Theologicis*, Lib. XI.

rather to learn, I pass on to observe, in the last place, that the whole scope and matter of this book may be regarded as peculiarly interesting and useful to persons who inhabit countries separated from Catholic communion, and at a distance from the traditional customs and manners of the Christian life. In such lands, the faithful may be said to live and converse principally with the spirits of former times, with their saintly and heroic ancestors, who lived in ages of faith. No men of cultivated minds and delicate susceptibility suffer such privations there as Catholics: for the sense of the beautiful and the just is nourished continually in their minds, and refined and sublimated, while the matter on which it might be externally exercised is withdrawn. Excluded from the august temples, which stand as monuments of ancient faith, they have none of those local resources which the wisdom of religious ages had provided for souls like theirs; they cannot continually behold gracious and ennobling objects to be the defence of holy thoughts against the impressions of vanity. To summon them to holy rites, no solemn tower sends forth its mighty peal; the outward form of things ceases to be divine, for they behold no places of public state and grandeur, sanctified by the emblems of their religion; confined, and fettered, and thwarted in desire, their's are but maimed rites. For them no night is now with hymn or carol blest. Even nature's beauties are cut off and appropriated, in a manner, from the holy purpose for which they know them to have been originally intended. Every pleasant site, every hill and gentle shore is claimed for uses of luxury or secular profit, (for the new sects seem conscious that there is no connection between them and the divine harmonies of the natural and material world;) they who are of the eternal fold can possess only some new and frail edifice, in the meanest and obscurest recess of a distant suburb, for

the sanctuary of the Lord of Glory. For them, therefore, books, and especially the annals of Christian ages, are a principle of life almost essential. It is to them that a Bede and an Alcuin are dear and precious, and that there can be no higher enjoyment than to stray along the sea beaten shores of Lindisfarne and amidst Iona's piles,

Where rest from mortal toil the Mighty of the Isles.

Men say that this is the most distressing of all cases, when any one knows admirable things, but is obliged by necessity to keep at a distance from them.

καλὰ γιγνώσκοντ' ἀνάγκη
ἐκτὸς ἔχειν πόδα *.

And these lines of Pindar may well be applied to those few faithful Christians who are found in such lands, pursuing their way alone through regions which seem deserted of God, and light, and joy.

Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram
Perque domos Ditis vacuas, et inania regna.

Visions of grief and care meet them at every step.

————— Tristisque Senectus
Et Metus, et malesuada Fames, et turpis Egestas
Terribiles visu formæ, Lethumque, Laborque;
Tum consanguineus Lethi sopor, et mala mentis
Gaudia, mortiferumque adverso in limine Bellum;
Ferreique Eumenidum thalami, et Discordia demens †.

They must seem insensible to all the impious deeds around them, or they will hear terrible menaces, in words like those of Charon, "This is the place of shades, of sleep, and night." It is not lawful to carry the living in the Stygian vessel,—

Corpora viva nefas Stygiâ vectare carinâ.

* Pindar Pyth. Od. IV.

† Æneid. VI. 268.

Thus these nations used to cry, let there be no Catholics amongst us, it is not lawful that they should be seen here ; which was as much as to say, it is not lawful to admit the living among the dead. Meanwhile, every thing serves to remind them of their saintly and mighty ancestors. Their magnificent domes and towers still remain, of which every arch has its scroll teaching Catholic wisdom, and every window represents some canonized saint.

The spot that angels deigned to grace
Is blessed, though robbers haunt the place.

And though their graves are yearly violated, and the stone cases which contain their venerable ashes hewn and scattered on the public ways, still does their virtue live, by a kind of vague tradition, in the memory of the people :—

Even by the bad commended, while they leave its course
untrod.

Towns still bear no other name but that of the saint or martyr who first gave them renown,—a St. Alban, a St. Neot, a St. Ives, or a St. Edmund. Our lonely mountain sides still have crosses, whose rude form attest their Saxon origin, and still are there pious hands among the simple people of those wild hills, to guard them from profanation. The sweet countenances of saintly kings and holy abbots, carved in stone, are still remaining over the solemn gates of venerable piles ; and by the side of the pompous inscription, in more than pagan vanity, the antique slab is often discernible, which humbly invokes the prayer for a soul's rest. There too still flow the same dark waters, o'er whose wave so often swept at midnight the peal of the convent bell, or was heard faintly chaunting the man of blessed order, as he hastened on the errand of charity. Lo, yonder

are the shattered arches of some abbey, on a river's bank, more lonesome than the roads that traverse desert wilds. It is Crowland, and at that calm and solemn hour

When near the dawn, the swallow her sad lay,
Rememb'ring haply ancient grief, renews;
When our minds, more wand'ers from the flesh,
And less by thought restrain'd, are, as 'twere, full
Of holy divination*.

You approach and kneel upon the spot, and the long deserted walls of the ruined sanctuary wonder at the pious stranger, who seems to bear alone, through a benighted world, the torch of faith. Where is now that devout assembly for the early sacrifice: (where that rich and varied order, the gorgeous vestments, and the bright gems, and all

The beauteous garniture of altars on a festal time †?

Our old historians dwell with delight upon the glory of this place. They describe at length the altars of gold, the richly painted windows, the solemn organs placed on high over the entrance, the candelabras of solid silver and the processional cross, the splendid presents of the Mercian kings, of the emperors of Germany, and princes of France, the beautiful buildings, the great hostel for the poor, and the hall for noble guests ‡. They leave us to picture to ourselves the benign countenance of meditative age, the cheerful grace of angelic youth, the innocent joys of study, the delights of unity and peace, the psalmody, the sweet entonation of sublime prayer, the silence, the charity, the faith so oft attested at St. Guthlac's shrine, the lives of the saints, and the death of the

* Dante Purg. IX.

† Ibid.

‡ Vide Ingulphus Hist. p. 9. Hist. Croylandensis Rerum Anglic. Script. Tom. I.

just! Alas! all are gone, and nothing remains but a desolation, the mere view of which chills the heart; some mouldering arches, which each succeeding winter threatens to lay prostrate; a line of wretched cabins, which shelter some wild people, that seem ignorant of God and Christ, untaught and sensual, like those who know not whether there was such a thing as the Holy Ghost, prepared to assure the stranger that these walls were once a gaol, or a place built by the Romans, while all around you lies a dark and dismal fen, where a gibbet is more likely to meet your eye than a cross, the image of death and not of redemption! The very earth seems to mourn,—“*Terram tenebrosam, et opertam mortis caligine, terram miseriae et tenebrarum, ubi umbra mortis, et nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabitat.*” Alas! what remained for the sad pilgrim, but to smite his breast and continue the accustomed chaunt,—“*Quid faciam miser? ubi fugiam? Anima mea turbata est valde; sed tua, Domine, succurre ei. Ubi est nunc præstolatio mea? et patientiam meam quis considerat? Tu es, Domine, Deus meus.*”

Yet he who hath made the nations of the earth curable * leaves no man without the sustenance which is required for the peculiar wants of his soul, and without the means of salutary exercise. In the worst of times there are redeeming features, and objects of imitation, such as what the Roman historian specifies “*ipsa necessitas fortiter tolerata: et laudatis antiquorum mortibus pares exitus †.*” And though our pomp must needs admit the pale companion, though in desiring the return of the reign of truth, we have but “wishes and tears, poor fancy’s followers;” yet still are left some of those that have St. Thomas for guardian, to comfort and direct

* *Sanabiles fecit nationes orbis terrarum. Sap. c. I. v. 14.*

† *Tacitus, Hist. Lib. I. 3.*

us on our way. We may not be able to enjoy the lot of Samuel, who departed not from the temple ; but there are chapels on the distant hills from before whose bright altars, setting forth into the darkness of night, having the stars for companions, and no other solace but to chaunt again by the way some of the sweet melodies which seem still to linger around us, we may travel homewards, and hope that each step has been reckoned by an angel. We may not be able to frequent the assemblies of the holy people who worship in vast cathedrals, and repeat with innumerable voices the solemn hymn which marks the yearly return of some most holy time, but we can walk alone in the woods, and sing the *Stabat Mater*, while the nightingale will lend her long and plaintive note to deepen and prolong the tones of that sweet and melancholy strain, and then our tears will fall upon the wild flowers, and we shall feel in communion with the holy dead ; with those who so oft had sung it, sad and sighing, like the Beatrice of Dante, in such a mood “ that Mary, as she stood beside the cross, was scarce more changed *.” Yes, beloved land, that would so smile on gentle, lowly spirits, land twice converted †, too fair to be for ever lost, thou art still dear to all thy sons, but doubly so to such of them as lament thy sad destiny ; for thy sweet meadows would cover themselves with the enamel of flowers to grace the progress of Jesus Christ in the victim of the altar ; thy solemn woods would give shelter to the lonely eremite, and thy bright streams would yield refreshment to the tabernacles of the

* *Purg.* XXXIII.

† The priests of England bore upon their albs, on the left shoulder, “ *quasi socipes de panno serico super assutas*,” the upper closed, in sign of there being but one faith, but the lower divided, as a sign of their having been twice converted to the faith, first by the missionaries of Pope Eleutherius, and secondly by St. Augustine. *Chronicon Monasterii S. Bertini*, cap. I. Par. 1. *Martene Thesaurus Anecdotorum*, tom. III.

just ;—thy gardens would give roses to scatter before the adorable sacrament, and thy towns and hamlets would send forth their cheerful youth, children fair as the race of primal creatures, to commence their flowery sprinkling. Thou art still a noble instrument, though now mute or discordant. Ignorant and unskilful hands have played upon thee till they broke thee into a thousand parts ; but, though thus broken and disarranged, let but the master arise who can revive the Catholic chord, and thou wilt again send forth the sweetest music.

It is the remark of Frederick Schlegel that a love for the romantic world of the middle ages, and of their chivalry, has continued to characterize the poetry of England, even while the negative philosophy of her sophists has maintained its ground *. And though, at the same time, for reasons which do not require a sphinx to explain, the complaint of learned foreigners is most just, that the literature and antiquities of our ancestors have been no where throughout the civilized world more neglected than in England ; yet it is equally true, and still more remarkable, that in this country several old Catholic customs of the middle ages have been transmitted down to us, as if protected in ice, to be the astonishment of other nations. It is true they have lost all the qualities of life ; there is no spirit to vivify, no mind to direct them, but still the form, though dead and motionless, has something in it imposing and majestic ; nay, even pleasing and amiable. Indeed, a book might be composed on the latent Catholicism of many natives of this country, where every thing solid and valuable is, after all, either a remnant or a revival of Catholic thinking or institution. Methinks it would not be too much to suggest, from general principles, that youth, at least even in such a country,

* Philosophie der Geschichte II. 250.

can never be essentially opposed to Catholicism. Cold, dry negations, and that disdainful mood, however well it may suit the breasts that wear it, are not congenial with its warm and generously confiding nature. If it has heard the words of the blessed Gospel, which children can understand better than proud scholars swollen with vanity; if it has been familiarized with the paintings of Catholic artists, which a taste for the fine arts may have incautiously suffered to appear before it; if it has had on all sides the images and memorials of saints and martyrs; if it has been reared in a land abounding, in spite of fanatical and commercial Vandalism, with the ruins of sacred edifices and memorials of ancient faith; if it has visited the desolate cloister, and beheld the lofty cathedral, and heard the solemn bell; and if it has learned by accident to repeat some affecting incident connected with the sanctity and grandeur of times gone by, some beautiful passage in the wondrous lives of the meek men of God, and to feed its imagination with the mysterious lessons of sweet Christian poesy, in vain will pedagogues and worldly teachers have required it to adopt the protestations of men who doubt and deny and refuse to hear the Church. It is Catholic in heart, in genius, in modes of thinking, and even in many of its habits of life, and it must continue to be so until age and the world shall have tarnished its golden nature. These considerations again will justify my former position, that the study to which I purpose directing attention in these sheets will have a peculiarly domestic interest. Some, indeed, their conscience dimmed by their own or other's shame, may feel that parts are sharp, but notwithstanding, as Cacciaguida says to Dante, the whole vision shall be made manifest,

And let them wince, who have their withers wrung.
What though, when tasted first, the voice shall prove

Unwelcome ; on digestion, it will turn
To vital nourishment *.

Pindar sings truly, making allowance for the un-
blessed style, that “ the ancient virtues recover
fresh strength which had been changed with the ages
of men. For neither does the black earth produce
her fruit in ceaseless succession, nor do the trees
send forth their odoriferous blossom in every period
of the year, but only at certain intervals, and in the
same manner also is the strength or virtue of mortals
subjected to the government of fate †.” Meanwhile,
the display of the ancient virtues which belonged to
ages of faith, and the diligent search into the customs
and manners of Christian antiquity must be pecu-
liarly valuable to those upon whom the iniquity of
the proud is multiplied. For it is by remembering
the blessed spirits

That were below, ere they arriv'd in heav'n,
So mighty in renown, as every muse
Might grace her triumph with them ‡.

That they learn to feel the wretchedness of those
that are on earth,

All after ill example gone astray ;

I myself have found, while living in a Catholic coun-
try, that these instances taken from the middle ages,
of the customs and manners of a Christian life, of
charity and zeal, of holy penitence and angelic in-
nocence, of wealth and time, beauty and service
devoted to God and to the poor, lost half their in-
terest, because they differ in nothing from what
passed actually around men, and from what was
as familiar as the ordinary occurrences of domestic
life ; but in faithless lands, unless within the walls of
a college, or in some singularly favoured family,

* Paradise, XVII.

† Nem. Od. XI.

‡ Dante, Paradise XVIII.

they seem to be wholly historical, if not a part of poetry, to belong to another world, or to a time gone by for ever. It is by the study which recalls the images of former sanctity, and the former prevalence of truth, that men are enabled to draw lessons from the very stones of their ruined abbeys, which will seem to dictate that solemn prayer, "*Salvum me fac, Domine, quoniam defecit sanctus, quoniam diminutæ sunt veritates à filiis hominum* *." Nor is it an advantage unworthy of regard which will result from studying the history of ages of faith, that it may be made even a source of consolation and support in our last hours : for how sweet, then, will be the thought that, perhaps, through grace of highest God we may be admitted to behold the crowd of great and holy men, with whom such studies will have made us long familiar ! to enter that country whither have already journeyed all who have ever been the objects of our love and reverence ! There will be the princes under whose happy reign the Church had peace and freedom, there the meek confessors, and there the lowly ones who ran to follow Christ. Truly in vain will have been these studies if we cannot derive this consolation from them ; for

————— What to thee is others' good,
If thou neglect thy own †.

Mabillon, in his preface to the fifth age of the Benedictines, speaks of those who had assisted him in the labour of this vast enterprise, and mentions in particular, one young man, John Jessenetus, (who had begun to furnish some illustrations,) a youth of the greatest hopes, who was cut off by a sudden death, while on a journey, returning with him from Lotharingia. Mabillon adds these affecting words, "I wish that his meditating on the glory of the saints

* Psal. II.

† Dante, Purg. X.

may have been profitable to him for a better life ! I wish it may not turn to my confusion, that after being occupied during so many years on the acts of the saints, I should be so far removed from their examples."

But I return to speak in general as to the course and object to be pursued in the following research. It has often been a subject of astonishment and complaint, that a direction almost exclusively classical, should be given to the studies of youth in modern times, and though it might not be difficult to detect the real cause which has operated to produce this partiality, which certainly must be sought elsewhere than in the supposed barrenness and barbarism of the ancient Christian literature, it may be sufficient here to bear testimony to the justice of such complaints. For, in fact, what can be more unreasonable than to maintain that an acquaintance with the histories and manners of the ancient Greeks and Romans is more essential to complete the instruction of Christians than the like knowledge of the habits and institutions of their own national ancestors and fathers in the faith ; that an English student should be familiar with Livy without having ever even heard of Ingulphus, or a William of Malmesbury ; that he should know by heart the sentences of Demosthenes, without being aware that St. Chrysostom was, perhaps, his equal in eloquence and grandeur ; and that he should be afraid of corrupting his latinity by looking into St. Jerome, of whom Erasmus said, that if he had a prize to award between him and Cicero, he should be tempted to give it to the Christian father rather than to the great orator of Rome. Ah ! could these mighty spirits of the ancient world give utterance to the conviction which now possesses them in answer to the multitude of voices which continually are raised from earth to speak their praise, they would counsel their fond admirers to place their affection upon

Diviner models ; they would speak in words like those of the shade of Virgil, when he first meets Dante. " We lived in times of false and lying gods ; we sung of earthly conquests ; but why dost thou return into this fatal region ? why not scale this delicious mountain, which is the beginning and the cause of all joy ? "

————— At Rome my life was past,
Beneath the mild Augustus, in the time
Of fabled Deities and false. A bard
Was I, and made Anchises' upright son,
The subject of my song, who came from Troy,
When the flame preyed on Ilium's haughty towers.
But thou, say wherefore to such perils past
Return'st thou ? Wherefore not this pleasant mount
Ascendest, cause and source of all delight * ?

I am aware, indeed, that books have of late been written, (and how many it skills not to say), with the professed object of instructing men in the spirit and manners of the middle ages ; but without wishing to delay in sounding forth my own praises, and in condemning the works of others who have already written on this subject, after the manner that we used to hear censured of Anaxilaus and Theopompus, who are known to have thus launched forth in their prefaces to their histories.—I may be allowed to urge that complaint against some of our contemporary historians, which Dionysius expressed in reference to men, " who had dared," as he says, " to compose histories with the sole object of making them agreeable to barbarous kings who hated Rome, to flatter whom they wrote certain gracious books, which were neither just nor true †." For these great men of the earth, though barbarous, who so cordially hate Rome, there continues to be no want of corresponding writers, whom no reverence of the keys re-

* Hell, Canto I.

† Dionysii Halicarnass. Antiquit. Rom. Lib. I. 4.

strains. The ancients have left us an excellent example, in evincing a most lively interest in all that related to the antiquities of their country, and the customs of their ancestors. Cicero says that he had written an elaborate work, "*De moribus, institutisque majorum et disciplina ac temperatione civitatis* *." Dionysius says, in the first book of his history, "*ἀπὸ τῶν παλαιοτάτων μύθων*, which former writers have omitted, and which cannot be found without great pains and difficulty;" though he speaks elsewhere of one writer who had made a collection of these ancient stories †. Plautus improves upon the counsel of Pindar, and says that they are wise, "*qui libenter veteres spectant fabulas* ‡." Now it is not certainly too much to affirm, that the customs and manners of the middle ages are deserving of quite as much attention from us, as that Homeric way of life, and those Pythagorean manners spoken of by Socrates §, that their literature might supply most interesting variety to those who may very well think that they have heard enough of the hard Eurystheus and the altars of the illaudible Busiris, and the other verses which continue to arrest so many vacant minds; and that these our domestic antiquities would furnish ample matter to exercise, with the greatest advantage, all our diligence and research, though we had the industry of a Chrysippus, who was so curious, as Cicero says, in collecting various examples from all history ||. St. Ambrose mentions that he had himself written a book, "*De Patrum Moribus* **;" but it would be difficult to find a work which entered into the full detail of the manners and institutions of the ancient Christian society amongst

* Tuscul. Lib. IV. 1.

† Lib. I. 68.

‡ Prolog.

§ Plato, de Repub. Lib. X.

|| Tuscul. I. 45.

** Epist. Lib. VI. 37.

our ancestors. In the composition of these books, I shall avail myself of the interesting writings which remain to us from the middle age; of which we may say, with far greater justice than Quintilian affirmed of the old Latin authors, “*Sanctitas certe, et ut sic dicam, virilitas ab his petenda, quando nos in omnia deliciarum genera vitiaque, dicendi quoque ratione, defluximus* *.” The ancients, from a general principle, professed a great respect and admiration for their old authors. Cicero and Virgil both extracted gold from Ennius: Horace thought that the reading of the books of the ancients was the best consolation for the misery of the present.—

O rus! quando te aspiciam, quandoque licebit,
Nunc veterum libris
Ducere sollicitæ jucunda obliviam vitæ †?

The Romans speak with enthusiasm of their Attius, their Pacuvius, and their Nuvius, for whom they have almost a religious respect. Thus Quintilian, in reference to them, says, “Let us revere these old trees of our sacred groves, whose trunks, half decayed, have something in them most venerable, which even time seems to respect while it destroys them.”

Without alluding to the works of a St. Thomas or an Anselm, and others, whose names should stand, not so much for the names of men as of wisdom and even eloquence, there are a multitude of works which date from that forgotten period of the middle ages, of whom fame has no note; in which, like an ancient temple, there is not so much grace and elegance as religion, but yet, which contain many bright sentences, and many things to be read for the sake of manners; whose authors do not collect the rain-water, but burst forth into a living spring.

* Inst. Lib. I. 8.

† Lib. II. Sat. 6. v. 66.

From these works, then, “*quasi quodam sancto augustoque fonte nostra omnis manabit oratio* *.” They will be quoted, but without any reference to the disputes and controversies which modern writers may have raised upon them. Mabillon, in applying himself to illustrate the acts of the Benedictine order, found the necessity, from the first, of approaching things so ancient with the mind of an ancient, free from the disputes of more recent times, and anxious only to serve the common cause of Christian religion †. To some it will appear a recommendation, that truth is not produced here as in a work of reasoning, where, as Bonald says, it is like a king at the head of his army on a day of battle,—but rather, as in one of sentiment, where he compares it to a queen on the day of her coronation, amidst the pomp of festivity, the splendour of a court, the acclamations of a whole people, the decorations and perfumes, and surrounded by all that is magnificent and gracious. And as Alexander Borgia was wont to say of the expedition of the French for Naples, that they came with chalk in their hands to mark up their lodgings, and not with weapons to fight; so, with Lord Bacon, many will say, that they like better that entry of truth which cometh peaceably, with chalk to mark up those minds which are capable to lodge and harbour it, than that which cometh with pugnacity and contention ‡. I shall wander on, therefore, without fearing to be led far from the matter, even though I should resemble Isocrates in writing the praise of Helen; for I shall presume that my reader will be like the youth who disputes with Cicero, in the first book of the *Tusculans*, when he replies, that he remembers the proposed object of their conversation, from which

* Cicero, *Tuscul. Lib. V. 13.*

† *Præfat. in IV. Sæcul. Benedict. § 4.*

‡ Of the Advancement of Learning.

they had been led away, and adds, “Sed te de æternitate dicentem aberrare à proposito facile patiebar*.” But writers in our time affect to be more judicious in their style of discourse than even the Minerva of Homer †. Nevertheless, Euripides, as a philosopher or as a poet, does not stand higher in the estimation of sensible men, because he offers to prove, in the famous contest between him and Æschylus, in the shades, that he has never said the same thing twice ‡. It is Plato who is so fond of the maxim, καλὸν δὲ τό γε ὀρθὸν καὶ δις καὶ τρίς §. And we shall be on the soil of Catholicism;—that is, on the ground of infinity in great thoughts and gracious harmonies,—ground that is

Enlivened by that warmth, whose kindly force
Gives birth to flowers and fruits of holiness;

fruits, let it be remembered,

That ne’er were plucked on other soil.

In whatever direction, on that blessed shore, we turn our steps, we shall find inexhaustible riches of every virtue, of wisdom and learning, of beauty and grandeur; to cheer the sage, who may then detect the truth of things in an abyss of radiance, clear and lofty; to ravish that imagination of the young, which is kindled by the splendour of eternal light; and to satisfy in all

The increate perpetual thirst, that draws
Toward the realm of God’s own form ||.

Such a course, viewed in relation to the number of material images which truth and love assumed on earth, does not afford a prospect of a speedy termination; it rather would prepare us for a work deserving the title of that which Christine de Pisan

* I. 33.

† Odyss. I. 260.

‡ Aristoph. Ranæ. 1178.

§ De Legibus, XII.

|| Dante, Paradise, II.

wrote, and styled "Le chemin de longue estude." But if a description of the armour of one hero could justly occupy so many verses as those of Homer and Virgil, in explaining that of Achilles and of Æneas, what indulgence may not be granted to him who should endeavour to place before men's eyes the grandeur and holiness of the lives and deaths of men, under the ancient Catholic state? *περὶ γὰρ τίνος ἂν μᾶλλον πολλάκις τις νοῦν ἔχων χαίροι λέγων καὶ ἀκούων* *; it is such things which, as Socrates says, one should learn to sing to one's self: *καὶ χρὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὥς περ ἐπάδειν ἑαυτῷ* †. They should be embodied before the mind as if on a painted tablet; that, as the poet says, "even though we lived and speculated alone, Remembrance, like a sovereign prince, might still maintain for us a stately gallery of gay or tragic pictures." Yet I shall not swell the book with those sentences which serve, like straw and wool, to pack precious objects for a rude journey. The passage here will be into quick and generous souls, to whom precious fragments may be offered as I find them, without the delay of enveloping them in this stuffing of one's own creation. Cardan shews the advantage of such a plan, saying, "Brevity of language is of excellent service to persons of competent ability and knowledge, though to stupid and ignorant persons it may be useless. To those who have the power of understanding many things comprised in few words, this style impresses the mind with more force, brings light, and prevents things from vanishing through oblivion; does not produce weariness; and while it increases the authority of the speaker, augments also in the hearer the desire of being gratified ‡." This mode of representing the lion only by shewing his claws, was greatly

* Plato, De Repub. II.

† Phædo, 114.

‡ Hieronym. Cardan. de Prudentia civili, Lib. cap. 1.

esteemed by the ancients, who studied the utmost brevity and compression in their writings, so as to speak much in a narrow space; whereas the moderns, who can trace no connection unless it can be touched with their fingers, are unable to understand any thing unless it be drawn out at length into a continued flowing discourse. We hardly can get beyond the bark of the old authors, who wrote with the greatest art and study; so that many things still lie deeply buried in their writings, which would amply repay men for the trouble of searching, and which would render any man now admirable. This is still the remark of Cardan, who gives the instance of Plato, who, hating Aristippus and Cleombrotus, wrote that they were in Ægina when Socrates was in prison*. For it was a fact, that Ægina was only XXV. M. P. distant from Athens†. From many writers of the middle age also, men might learn “scholastico more presse loqui,” although it is from their works that precedents may be produced to justify the frequent occurrence of poetry, with which these pages will be interspersed. Thus the Temple of Honour, by John le Maire, addressed to the Duchesse de Bourbonnois et d’Auvergne, daughter of Louis XI. is composed both of prose and verse, after the style of the work by Boethius on the Consolations of Philosophy‡; as is also Pierre Michault’s book, “Le Doctrinal de Cour,” and “Le Verger d’Honneur,” by André de la Vigne, and the Manuel Royal of John Breche, and the Life of Louis de la Tremouille, by John Bouchet; for the separation of the prose and poetry in this latter work was not made until the year 1536, when the poems were separately published.

It may be remarked in general, that the writers of

* Phædo.

† Ib. cap. 54.

‡ Gouget, Bibliothèque François, Tom. X. p. 70.

that period loved to embrace the whole of wisdom in their works. Thus, in the famous *Tresor* of Brunetto the Florentine, which is said to be “*un enchaussement des choses divines et humaines*,” there is an union of theology and the beauties of heathen literature. Perhaps too in this history there will be found matter to illustrate the position of Aristotle, *ὅτι χωρίζονται ἀλλήλων αἱ ἀρεταὶ* *, and that of Plato, when he says, that our soul seems to him to resemble a book †. Its form shall not resemble that which the writers of wars give to their histories, nor such as that adopted by men who relate the separate condition of particular states, nor that of those meagre annals which are so tedious and uninviting; but it shall be a mixed style, like that proposed by Dionysius, “composed of every idea, both positive and theoretical, that it may be agreeable both to those who study the policy of nations and to those who devote themselves to philosophic speculation, and also to such as seek a kind of quiet delight in the reading of history ‡.” So that the subject here proposed would require a writer like the old Monk of Cluny, Udalricus, who collected with diligence the ancient customs of that place; of whom it is said, “He was a learned Father, producing from his treasury things new and old, with which he instructed many to knowledge.” It may with truth be said here, referring to what I have found in ancient books,

*Ἔχω καλὰ τε φράσαι, τόλμα τέ μοι
Εὐθεΐα γλώσσαν ὀρνύει λέγειν §.*

Or, as Pindar sings of himself elsewhere, “There are to me, within the quiver, many quick arrows, sounding to the wise, though with the vulgar they may want an interpreter.”

* *Ethic. VI. 13.*

† *Antiquit. Rom. Lib. I.*

‡ *Philebus.*

§ *Pindar, Olymp. XIII.*

Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν· ἐς
Δὲ τὸ πᾶν, ἐρμηνέων
Χατίζει*.

The whole may be styled a rhapsody, for it is made up of fragments, and from the works of men who, like Homer, flourished in an heroic age—

Hic genus antiquum —————
Magnanimi heroës, nati melioribus annis †.

And the rule for such compositions would not be unworthy of a Christian author, for the Scoliaſt on Pindar informs us that the rhapsodists always began with the name of Jove †. Farther than fragments collected in a ſpirit of reverence, nothing can be expected here.

Floriferis ut apes in ſaltibus omnia libant,
Omnia nos itidem depaſcimur aurea dicta §.

Certainly if one were ambitious of taking lofty ground in ſelf-defence for ſuch a mode of compoſition, there might be produced abundant precedents. Plautus and Terence took whole ſcenes from ancient poets, and Cardinal Bona appeals to the example of Virgil, Cicero, Aristotle, and alſo of Plato, who transferred a great part of the work of Philolaus into his Timæus. Nay, Homer himſelf ſupplies an inſtance, as Euſtathius ſhews. Apollodorus uſed to ſay, that if any one took from the books of Chryſippus what he had borrowed from others, there would be left only empty ſheets. St. Jerome remarks, that the writings of St. Ambroſe are filled with the ſentences of Origen. The ſecond part of

* Olymp. II.

† Æneid, VI. 644.

‡ Rhapsody, from ῥάπτω ῥῶδῃ, becauſe the Rhapsodists ſung fragments from Homer. The Scoliaſt on Pindar, Nem. III. Od. 2, ſays that they were of the family of Homer, and Pindar calls them the children of Homer.

§ Lucret. Lib. III.

the *Somme* of St. Thomas is taken almost entirely from the *Speculum* of Vincentius Belacensis. And such a mode is absolutely inseparable from the course of one who attempts to exhibit ancient manners and ways of thinking :—

Veterum volvens monumenta virorum *.

Which is the object here proposed :—for,

————— *Tibi res antiquæ laudis et artis*
Ingredior, sanctos ausus recludere fontes †.

It may be objected to the design of this work, that it engages one in the support of an arbitrary system, which would lead us from viewing the truth of history. Before replying to this charge, I would observe, that the expression, a system or systematic, may be taken and employed in a double signification ; in a good and praiseworthy sense, as well as in one that deserves blame and rejection. In this latter sense, it appears in those phrases which affirm that some thing is a mere system, or conformable to this or that system, in which judgment, as Frederick Schlegel remarks, “men do not intend to affirm that it stands upon no ground whatever, a mere creation of caprice, but rather, perhaps, that though it may contain many truths and much good, yet it does not extend to the whole of truth ; or, in a word, that the systematic connection is only external and visible and a mere delusive contrivance ; whereas, in a good and right sense, we may say that a work is a system, or that it is systematic, in allusion to its internal connection, and to the uniform and living unity which pervades it throughout ‡.” Now, in this latter sense, every work which is written in the spirit of Catholicism must be a system ;

* *Æneid* III. 102.

† *Georg.* II. 174.

‡ *Philosophie der Sprache*, p. 7.

that is, it must embrace the whole of truth. However broken and imperfect its arrangement, though it be but a rhapsody, it must still be systematic, in this noble and just sense of the term ; and, in fact, it is nothing but this Catholic view of things, conceived in its highest degree of clearness, which Dante describes in that unrivalled passage, which is near the close of the Paradise, where he says that he looked, and in the depth of the everlasting splendour

Saw in one volume clasp'd of love, whate'er
The universe unfolds ; all properties
Of substance and of accident beheld
Compounded, yet one individual light
The whole *.

Many saintly men, like St. Benedict, have reached the same pitch, in more than poetic semblance, and have described it ; while its practical effects have been the support and consolation of all the just. These have been expressed in the sacred songs : “ Ambulabam in latitudine, quia mandata tua exquisivi,” said David ; and again, “ Eduxit me in latitudinem ;” and again, “ Statuisti in loco spatioso pedes meos †.”

It is true that I shall not stop to take up the odious and degrading objects which may occasionally be met with on the way. We read, in Homer, that when Jove suspended the fatal balance, and the scale of Hector descended, that immediately Apollo left him—

————— λίπεν δ' ἔ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων †.

The Muse should forsake all cursed and condemned things abandoned by God ; not search for them and make them the subject of interminable complaints. “ How have my verses injured the state ?” asks Euripides. “ Have I composed the

history of Phædra otherwise than according to the facts?" "Nay, according to the facts," replies his accuser Æschylus. "But you should not have produced what is evil, and bring it upon the scene to pervert the minds of youth." Some are yet to be convinced of the wisdom of our modern writers, who would agree with Euripides in maintaining that it was more useful to expose on the stage, all the turpitudes of his familiar fables, than to resemble Æschylus in the lofty and superhuman grandeur of his theme*. Let no one, however, express his alarm here on account of truth. We do not think it a pardonable offence to invent and publish falsehoods, however admirable in appearance respecting holy men, like Pindar, who says that it may be allowable for mortals to frame beautiful tales in honour of the immortals†. Strictly speaking, however, the best history of these middle ages would be collected from a series of biographical memorials respecting the great and holy personages who flourished from the time of Charlemagne and Alfred till their close. Frederick Schlegel says, "I would rather seek to find the true quality of a Christian state during this period, in a series of portraits, representing men who were great in a Christian sense, and who governed according to Christian principles, than in any scientific definition‡." But all things now are full of pedantry. History is only regarded as a mine from which men of every political school can extract the matter which can be made serviceable to the illustration of their respective theories; and even when they loudly protest against such an application of historical study, they are still like inquisitive mechanics, who, when present at the representation of a solemn tragedy, occupy

* Aristoph. *Ranæ*, 1055.

† Olymp. I.

‡ Philosophie der Geschichte, II. 20.

themselves solely in endeavouring to discover by what wires and pullies the scenes are shifted, and the artifices of the stage conducted, without ever having one thought excited by the harmony of the heroic pageant. How much wiser and more acute are those who are sitting in ignorance of what passes behind the scenes, and only anxious to co-operate with the moral intentions of the poet, which were to instruct, to delight, and to move ! Whether it be from a mere vanity, which makes men anxious to evince the powers of an analytical mind, even though it is to be misapplied, or whether it be from the deeper motive mentioned by St. Jerome, saying, “*Lacerant sanctum propositum, et remedium pœnæ suæ arbitrantur, si nemo sit sanctus **,” or whether it arise from that mistaken principle which perverts the whole of modern philosophy, and which displays men as the poet says, who

Viewing all objects unremittingly,
In disconnection dead and spiritless ;
And still dividing, and dividing still,
Break down all grandeur †,

the great object of modern research seems to consist in contriving arguments which will oblige men to renounce their admiration for ancient deeds of virtue, and to come to the conclusion, that there is no one who can shew them any good. Well might the poet feel it sad

————— to hear
The repetitions wearisome of sense,
Where soul is dead and feeling hath no place ;
Where knowledge, ill begun, in cold remark
On outward things, with formal inference ends.

A distinguished professor in the Academy of Paris complains of the Germans, and says that

* Epist. XXVIII.

† Wordsworth, the Excursion.

“ whenever a social state appears noble and good, seen on one grand side, they regard it with an exclusive admiration and sympathy. They are inclined generally to admire, to be impassioned ; imperfections, deficiencies, and the bad side of things strike them but little. Singular contrast ! In the sphere purely intellectual, in the research and combination of ideas, no people have more extent of mind and more philosophic impartiality ; and when facts are concerned which address themselves to the imagination, which excite moral emotions, they fall easily into narrow prejudice and confined views ; their imagination wants fidelity and faith ; they lose all poetical impartiality ; they do not see things under all their faces and such as they really are *.” This long dogmatical censure, as far as it is intelligible, proves only the good sense and judgment which guides the imagination that it condemns. Sin and evil are only negations in the universal view of this creation, and to the person whose mind is united with the source and essence of all created things, they are as if not existing. They interrupt not for a moment his view of the immensity of that great glory for which his heart devoutly returns continual thanks.

It may be further objected to the present design, that it does not suppose sufficient attention to distinguish the peculiar character of each age in the annals of the Christian society, and that consequently it would tend to give, at the best, but a very confused idea of the history of the period. But nothing can be farther from it than to profess to give a history of these ages in any ordinary sense of the term. The object in view is to shew in how many details the life and institutions of men were then inspired with the Christian spirit, and if the succession

* Guizot, Cours d'Hist. Mod. IV. 3.

of ages are not always distinguished, it is because such a distinction would be wholly unnecessary to the proposed argument. And after all, as far as relates to the greatest part of the subjects that will here be introduced, all ages of the Church are one and the same, in like manner as when the soul is united to God,

Looking at the point whereto all times are present ;

there is for her neither past nor future ; she is in possession of eternity, and in the bosom of this immutable eternity, which is God ; she possesses all things.

I deny not, that in some respects, there may be ground for many timid friends of truth to think that there is danger and novelty in the course which is here laid down for us. What more dangerous, they will say, than to attempt to eulogize these ancient times, which so many deem to have been buried in darkness and barbarism ? And

Why dost thou with single voice renew memorial of their praise ?

I admit, that in some parts we may seem to arrive at troubled and turbid waters. Convinced, however, notwithstanding the arguments of the sophists, that there is always excellent store beyond them ; I only ask, in the Platonic style, “ Whether I, being youngest, and having experience of many streams, may not be permitted to try first to pass alone, leaving those who would counsel me to watch in safety, and determine if it be fordable to them also who are older ; that if it should prove so, they also may cross over, but if it be not passable, it will be of no importance that I should incur danger *.” We shall enter on a forest where no track of steps hath worn a way, but it may resemble that forest of

* Plato, de Legibus, Lib. X.

Colonea, the forest of the sombre destinies, yet flourishing with all the sweet verdure of a Grecian spring, within which the laurel, and the olive, and the vine, are found, and where the nightingale pours forth her ceaseless song*. I shall not find the track of many lately preceding us. For there is no chance here of discovering mines of gold and silver, or any thing that can be turned into money; nor can I hope that many will hereafter follow. I am but a lonely gleaner "through fields time-wasted;" but the weakest may do something, and as a father says, "sometimes what has been left by the perfect is found by a little boy." It will be something in our age to bring any one to reverence the style of the ignoble Capaneus, "We are much better than our fathers:"

Τῷ μὴ μοι πατέρας ποθ' ὁμοίῃ ἐνθεο τιμῇ †.

and to say not merely from devotion, but upon a ground of historical veracity, "Sufficit mihi Domine; neque enim melior sum quam patres mei." It will be something to make the proud world see that all were not of its train; that there were those "who faith preferred, and piety to God." But whatever be the supposed danger, or the apparent novelty, let it be well understood that the whole is written in a spirit of the most humble submission to the judgment of our holy mother the Catholic Church, and that if any thing should be in the least at variance with that judgment, I renounce, and in proportion to the degree of variance, abhor it with the utmost clearness of tongue and sincerity of heart.

In a little work that once met the eye of a few persons, whom chance or private friendship directed to it, which attempted to unfold the ways of the ancient chivalry, may perhaps be traced the commence-

* Sophoc. *Cedip. Col.*

† Il. IV. 410.

ment of this course, of which I now enter upon the last stages. Here we need a still more simple construction, and one ought to perceive already that we move in a freer sphere, as in imagination we draw nearer to the limit where all wishes end. It should be no longer that same mixture of grace and terror, as when we consorted with the offspring of earth and darkness. The burlesque and the ignoble ought to disappear. We are entering as if within that circle of hope described by Dante, which inspires temperance in sadness, and a melancholy, always gentle, which has left all the misanthropy of this lower world and of hell. The haughty knight, severe and inflexible in his judgments, must disappear now or leave but few traces, and we shall seem, though some will ascribe it only to a greater degree of weakness, to have lost the memory of the agitations of the world: and though the subject of this book will be so high above me, there need be no charge of great presumption, for it will not be as a priest or man of blessed order that I shall propose my thoughts, but like to those who, speaking before their betters with reverent awe,

Draw not the voice alive unto their lips.

I shall but suggest things in imperfect sounds ; coming forth as the meanest brother, that has only charge of the outward gate of the blissful enclosure, or perhaps as the last comer among the rude strangers of the common hall ; and if still sometimes there should be aught of rash and intemperate observable, it will be enough to remember, that such men have long haunted the proud courts of mundane chivalry, and that time is needful no less for diseases of the mind than for those of the body. The sea itself, for a long while after the tempest, is still agitated ; still its waves retire back to return again and dash themselves against the shore, and it is not

till after a great interval that they become appeased and recover their original tranquillity. Ah! truly, to lead men to consort with the spirits of the great and good of times gone by, demands a tongue not used to childlike babbling:—

Myself I deem not worthy, and none else
Will deem me. I, if on this voyage then
I venture, fear it will in folly end *;

for I shall sometimes catch, even amidst the music of angelic bells, the wild measure of those tales that once charmed me:

Rude though they be, still with the chime
Return the thoughts of early time.

Then will begin to rise the ancient pride, and like the last minstrel in Newark's tower, he who once loved all the pomp of chivalry, will begin, perhaps, (such grounds are there for suspecting the truth of Plato's notion, that names are of some importance in determining the human course,)

————— to talk anon
Of good Earl Francis dead and gone,
And of Earl Walter, rest him God!
A braver never to battle rode.

Thus "speaking of matters, once perhaps befitting well to speak, now better left untold;" and then going on to say—

————— He would full fain,
He could recall an ancient strain
He never thought to sing again.

For he too his legendary song could tell

Of ancient deed, so long forgot;
Of feuds whose memory was not;

* Dante, Hell II

Of forests, now laid waste and bare ;
Of towers which harbour now the hare ;
Of manners, long since changed and gone ;
Of chiefs, who under their grey stone
So long had slept, that fickle fame
Hath blotted from her rolls their name.

Alas ! it must indeed be admitted, in concluding this preliminary discourse, that, in alluding almost inadvertently to this seductive power of deceitful images, and to this variety of contending themes, within the bounds of the imagination, we have laid bare a source of real danger, enough to make us proceed tremblingly on our way in thoughtfulness and dread ; for it is the counsel of the wise, as given in the words of Albert the Great, that we should abstain from the phantasms and images of corporeal things, because above all things that mind pleases God which is naked and stript from these “ forms and features ; since it is certain, that if the memory, imagination, and thought be at leisure often to dwell on such things, it will follow that the mind must be entangled with new or with the reliques of ancient things, or be variously qualified, according to other objects ; and the spirit of grace and truth departs from thoughts which are without understanding. Therefore a true lover of Jesus Christ ought to be so united in understanding, by a good will to the Divine will and to goodness, and so removed from all phantasms and passions, that he should not observe whether he be despised or honoured, or in what way soever entreated, but should be in a manner transformed into the Divine likeness, so as not to see any other creatures or himself, unless only in God, and so as to love only God, and to remember nothing of others or of himself, unless in God *.”

* Albertus, M. de adhærendo Deo, cap. VI.

These are the thoughts which purge the world's gross darkness off, and which heal the wounds of those that weep to see "the heathen come." I would exclaim in those words of Dante to the spirit of Oderigi, who had shewn the vanity of earthly ambition. True great Albert,

True are thy sayings; to my heart they breathe
The kindly spirit of meekness, and allay
What tumours rankle there *.

CHAPTER II.

AND now delaying no longer through distrust, for they will assist me whose manners I record, let us advance as if we heard intoned the sentence from the mount, as if voices in strain ineffable did sing, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Blessed the poor! Ah, how far unlike to this the learning of those that are without. There it was said with the great Stagyrte, "We fear all evil things; such as loss of fame, poverty, sickness, friendlessness, and death †." And here we are taught that each one of these can be the object of a Christian's love who meekly follows Christ. Aristotle insists that it is disgraceful, and indicative of the highest insolence not to fear the want of glory. So far behind does his famed learning halt. The Athenian, with Plato, would make a law in every state to this effect, "Let there be no poor person in the city, let such a person be banished from the cities, and from the forum, and from the

* Purg. XI.

† Ethic. Nicomach. Lib. III. 6.

country fields, that the country may be altogether pure and free from an animal of this kind *." In short, for four thousand years poverty was looked upon as a dreadful evil, a sign of malediction, inso-much that even he who was by such love inspired, that all our world craves tidings of his doom, prayed to God to deliver him from it. And such continues to be the case, for wherever the influences of the Catholic Church of Christ has not become dominant, the same sentiments maintain their ground among men, and form them to action. The poor are still those vile animals against whom the Athenian proposed to make laws, banishing them from every place of public resort, that the country may be clear of them. The Bonzes of Japan, in the time of St. Francis Xavier, even taught that neither the poor nor women could be saved, and the contrary doctrine of the Gospel was what chiefly rendered the preaching of that holy missionary so strange to them †. The ages of faith were admirable in the contrast which they exhibited to this opinion and practice respecting the condition of poverty, as I shall proceed to shew, by pointing out what were the sentiments held respecting it, and what was, in fact, the practice of men during that period. The sentiments, the principles, the philosophy, or, in short, the religion of men, in these ages, taught expressly that since the incarnate Son of God had chosen poverty for himself, and poverty in all its bitter circumstances, and had pronounced a blessing upon the spirit which corresponded with it, it was therefore a good and holy state to be borne cheerfully by all, and even to be embraced voluntarily by such as aspired to perfection ; and in fact many, who like St.

* "Ὅπως ἡ χώρα τοῦ τοιούτου ζώον καθαρά γίγνηται τὸ παράπαν. De Legibus, Lib. XI.

† Bouhour's Vie de St. F. Xavier, II. 67.

Dominic, as Dante says, seemed messengers and friends fast-knit to Christ, shewed their first love after the first counsel that Christ gave. "Let the Pagan," says St. Bernard, "seek riches, who lives without God; let the Jew seek them, who receives temporal promises; but with what front, or with what mind can a Christian seek riches, after that Christ has proclaimed the poor blessed*?" "Not to have the burden of poverty," says St. Augustin, "is to have the burden more than needful of riches." The rich will discover at the last day what a weight has been this burden, unless the poor shall have relieved them of it by receiving their alms. There will remain nothing to them but that terrible woe of the Gospel, *Væ vobis divitibus!* Christ in his Gospel speaks to the rich only to thunder against their pride, *Væ vobis divitibus!* A virgin can conceive, a barren woman can bring forth a child, a rich man can be saved; these are three miracles of which the Holy Scriptures give us no other reason, but only that God is all powerful. This is what Bossuet says in his discourse on St. Francis of Assisium. St. Chrysostom says that there are always three considerations which should make a rich Christian humble: the contrast between the condition of the rich and that of Jesus Christ in poverty, the choice which Jesus Christ made of poverty for himself, and the character of malediction which he seems to have fixed upon riches. "O if we loved God as we ought," cries St. Augustin, "we should not have any love for money†." "The rich man speaks of his money," says St. Cyprian, "his goods, his riches, which are all to be kept for himself‡."

————— How many from their grave
Shall with shorn locks arise; who living, ay,

* Serm. I. De omnibus sanctis.

† In Joan. Tract. XL. 20.

‡ Epist. II.

And at life's last extreme, of this offence,
Through ignorance, did not repent *!

How many are, even now, like the shades described
by Virgil?

———— Quàm vellent æthere in alto
Nunc et pauperiem et duros perferre labores †!

Now, at least, they know, “how dear it costeth not
to follow Christ.”

“What have we to answer,” asks St. Cyprian, “to
the arguments of Satan against these wretched men,
when he asserts that they have always served him and
offered him their treasures? How can we defend
the souls of the rich covered with such thick dark-
ness ‡?” Woe to you, his wretched followers! cries
Dante, on beholding their distress in hell.

Of gold and silver ye have made your god,
Diff'ring wherein from the idolater,
But that he worships one, a hundred ye?
Now must the trumpet sound for you, since yours
Is the third chasm.————

Some of the ancient sages were not without an
insight into the evil and danger of riches, however
that truth was generally obscured. Plato shews that
the man who would correspond in his own life to the
best constituted state must despise riches from his
youth §. The man who in his life corresponds to a
state whose constitution is mixed with good and evil,
will despise riches while young; but as he grows
old, he will become fond of them, because he par-
takes of the money-loving nature, τοῦ φιλοχρημάτου
φύσεως, from not being devoted purely to virtue,
through having lost the best guard, which consists in
reason tempered with music, Λόγου μουσικῇ κερρα-

* Dante, Purgatory, XXII.

† De Bon. Op. et Eleemos.

‡ VI. 436.

§ De Repub. VIII.

μέρον· which alone is the preserver of virtue through life to whoever possesses it. And in another place he says, “We have proved, therefore, that the very rich are not good men, and if not good, that they cannot be happy *.” And of the rich and powerful man, Socrates says elsewhere, “that he is always in want of most things, and that he appears poor indeed if any one knows how to view his whole soul †.” In another place he speaks as follows : “Who can question the possibility of the sons and descendants of kings and despots being born with a true philosophic nature? No one certainly. But perhaps it will be said, that if such sons should be born to them, their disposition must, of necessity, be corrupted, for we have ourselves admitted that it is very difficult to save it. But that in all the lapse of time there should not have been one saved, it would be absurd to suppose. If, then, you grant the possibility of one escaping, it is sufficient to justify our hypothesis and to screen us from the charge of teaching impossibilities ‡.” This is language sufficiently discouraging to the rich, of whom there are many, and the good are rare. In truth, even according to the morals of Aristotle, such men might generally be found guilty in the two respects of deficiency in giving, and of excess in appropriating § : τῇ τ’ ἐλλείψει τῆς δόσεως καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῆς λήψεως. He says elsewhere, that “men who have ever so little, think that they have enough of virtue, but that they would go on to infinity adding to their wealth and possessions, to their power and glory ||.” Plato represents Socrates as laughing at men of this description, and saying, as if he had lived on the bank of Thames, “that they would regard it as the height of happiness

* De Legibus, Lib. V.

† De Repub. Lib. IX.

‡ De Repub. Lib. VI.

§ Ethic. Lib. IV. cap. 1.

|| Polit. Lib. VII. c. 1.

if they could have gold even within their bodies, three talents in their stomach, a talent in their skull, and a statera in each eye; and that they envy the Scythians for having their skulls lined with gold, though it is for men to drink out of them *."

But it was only in the school of Christ that ordinary men were enabled to discover the depth of the evil, and the exceeding folly of that spirit of appropriating riches to themselves. St. Chrysostom asks, "Why does not the gold that shines in the shops of merchants give you the same pleasure as if it belonged to you personally? At least this would not involve you in such a number of torments. You reply, because it does not belong to you. Thence I conclude that it is nothing but avarice which makes you love all these treasures. What mean these expressions, this is ours, and that does not belong to us? When I examine these words to the bottom I find only vanity and nothingness. How often does a single moment cause people to lose for ever what they call theirs? All this applies equally to those vast possessions, those magnificent houses, those delicious gardens, of which the rich men of this world are so proud, and in allusion to which you will find that the words 'mine and yours' are senseless and vain. For the use of these things is common to all, only those who are called the possessors have the trouble of taking care of them †." St. Chrysostom does not seem here to contemplate the possibility of such a state as that in which no one but the actual possessor was allowed to enjoy the goods of life, such as may now be seen in countries where a servile war has repeatedly been on the eve of breaking out, to close the tragedy of "mine and thine," personages which have played such a part from the very first in that drama par-

* Plat. Euthydemus.

† Tractatus de Virginitate, cap. 24.

taking of the terrible and the ludicrous, which professed to represent the downfall of superstition, and the establishment by law of the reign of primitive Christianity!

What must be the wretched state of that mind which can find delight in the solitude of pride, in the gloomy seclusion of vast parks, from which God and men are equally excluded? In the middle ages the castle of the Lord was surrounded by the houses of his dependents, and yet even then it was not a secret that his elevation had no privilege as to greater happiness. Martial d'Auvergne, in his Vigils of the death of Charles VII. contrasts the life of the great with that of the poor, and says

Mieulx vaut liesse
L'accueil et l'adresse,
L'amour et simpleesse
Des bergiers pasteurs,
Qu' avoir à largesse
Or, argent, richesse,
Ne la gentillesse
De ses grans Seigneurs ;
Car ils ont douleurs
Et des maulx greigneurs ;
Mais pour nos labeurs
Nous avons sans cesse
Les beaulx prés et fleurs,
Fruitaiques, odeurs.
Et joye à nos cueurs,
Sans mal qui nous blesse *.

And in a later age François Maynard could affirm in song, "that all the pompous houses of princes"

Ne sont que de belles prisons
Pleines d'illustres misérables †.

What did a splendid palace profit Cosmo de Medicis when, after the death of John, he used to walk in

* Gouget, Biblioth. Française, Tom. X. 51.

† Id. Tom. XVI. 69.

sorrowful meditation through the vast apartments, observing that it was too large a house for so small a family? Yet such is mortal blindness! Our Lord never inhabited any house which he could call his own, and we must establish ourselves in castles and Louvres which are to be called our's, as if we were never to leave our present habitations.

Riches were also known to be evil in a Christian sense, because of the innumerable obstacles which they evidently oppose to the spiritual life. “Ubi rerum omnium abundantia est, ibi plerumque etiam vitiorum,” says Drexelius*. Fuller confesses, in his quaint style, the secret which explained many changes which had lately occurred in his unhappy country: “The possession of superfluous wealth sometimes doth hinder our clear apprehensions of matters.” “Merchants,” says Cardan, “and they who arrive at riches by a continued course of smiling fortune, and also the majority of nobles, are time servers †.” “Avoid the great, and confer no benefit upon them, for they are by nature ungrateful; and the experience of this fact is more known than the reason is evident ‡.” Nobility, when it is not bound by the chains of the Catholic religion, will generally be proud and terrible in proportion to its power; and men who have only the sentiments of nature will be found to regard it alternately with abhorrence and with a kind of superstitious awe. Children dread the approach of those great men of the earth; and even age forgets, in his presence, what is due to its own native dignity. The proud rich man shews himself to his visitors and guests, as Plutarch says, “ὑποσκελίζεσθαι, προσκυνούμενον καὶ καταστολιζό-

* De conformit. humanæ voluntatis cum Divin. Lib. V. cap. 7.

† Prudentia Civilis, cap. VI.

‡ Id. cap. XL.

μενον καὶ ἀναπλαττόμενον ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὥσπερ ἄγαλμα βαρβαρικόν *.

In ages of faith, when such men did appear they were sure to hear language as bold and severe as that of St. Jerome, when he said, "Do not say to me, I am sprung from an illustrious race; I have always lived in delights, in the midst of every luxury; I cannot deprive myself of wine, nor of these exquisite meats, nor adopt so severe a mode of life. I would answer you with all the rigour of my ministry. Well then, live according to your law, since you cannot live according to the law of God †." They would have been reminded, that some centuries before the very title on which they prided themselves signified a miscreant, for the mēscréants and infidels were the "Gentiles." Father Lewis of Grenada was unable to take any other view of the great nobles of his age, of whom he said publicly, that almost all by pride and heaping up riches precipitate themselves and their heirs into hell ‡.

Curst be estate got with so many a crime,
Yet this is oft the stair by which men climb §.

To follow the spirit and manners of the gentle by denomination, from the times described by Spelman in his history of sacrilege to the present, one might almost suppose that the world had receded to that state during which the title passed under its heathen signification. That balance of Critolaus, of which the goods of the soul were placed in one scale and those of the body in the other ||, places them in no dilemma, for they decide without deliberation. They stigmatize the choice of a Francis and an Anthony

* How to discern true Friends, XXXV.

† S. Hieronym. Epist. ad Eustath.

‡ In Festo alicujus martyris Concio II.

§ Tasso, II. 58.

|| Cicero, Tuscul. V. 17.

as the folly of an abject superstition; and it would be hard even to find among them an example such as that of the heathen youth *Lysiteles*, who says of his poor friend, "*Quia sine omni malitia est, tolerare egestatem ejus volo**. Speak to them of "loving holy poverty, humility, and patience, following the way of Christ and of his saints †," like such multitudes of men of all ranks as did embrace this way in the ages of faith, and they reply, as in the words of *Spencer*,

—————"Lett be thy bitter scorne
And leave the rudenesse of that antique age
To them, that lived therein in state forlorne.
Thou that dost live in later times must wage
Thy workes for wealth, and life for gold engage ‡."

And even when their language is intended to be all disinterestedness and noble sentiment, even when these high-minded followers of reformers and patriots are for declaring their ardent desire to make every personal sacrifice to further some end which is to bear the semblance and win the honours of a holy cause, their tongues are unable to complete a sentence without providing always that there shall be "a reasonable equivalent" for themselves. Here an important reflection suggests itself. We often seem lost in astonishment at the slowness of men to comply with the loving invitations of the Church of Christ; we are amazed that unanswerable arguments should produce no effect upon the crowd of rich philosophers, who are all considered by the world as such enlightened judges. Ah! we might learn the reason of this from the Evangelist, where he says of some who heard all the things spoken by Christ, "*erant avari et deridebant illum* §." How should

* *Plautus, Trinum. II. 2.*

† *Thom. à Kempis, De tribus tabernaculis, I.*

‡ *Fairy Queen, II. 7.*

§ *Luc. XVI. 14.*

we expect them to answer otherwise to the dispensers of his mysteries? especially in a land like that the poet speaks of, "where for lucre a 'no' is quickly made?"

"Wisdom herself," says Pindar, "is fettered by gain."

*ἀλλὰ κέρδει καὶ σοφία δέδεται *.*

And Mammon wins his way when seraphs might despair!

True, such men may sometimes appear to be convinced, and even perhaps moved in their will to embrace the holy law of Catholics, but it will be only to furnish an example of a most strange and awful phenomenon in the human heart. Father Lewis of Grenada points out this, "How subtle is self-love, and how it seeks some utility for itself, even amidst noble affections. When Paul disputed concerning the judgment to come, before Felix, with such force that we are told that Felix was filled with awe, and that he trembled, what do we find was the consequence of this terror? Truly a wonderful thing. 'At the same time,' says Luke, 'he hoped that he would receive money from Paul.' Who could have conceived this †?"

No longer, then, let any one be surprised at finding every intellectual force unavailable with the rich, or with those who love money, in poverty: with those whom Cicero describes as "a race of men horrible and fearful, who hold their possessions embraced with such love, that rather than relinquish them, you would say, their limbs might sooner be torn from their bodies ‡."

But how far have we wandered from beatitude? Beati pauperes! Ah! how deeply did these words

* Pyth. Od. III.

† In Festo B. Jacobi Concio II.

‡ Pro L. Flacco.

sink into the hearts of men in faithful ages! Such is the eminent dignity of the poor in the Church, that Bossuet declares that already, even in this world, by means of the Church, God has partly fulfilled that sentence which will hereafter be fully accomplished, that the last shall be first, and the first last. In the world, the poor seem born only to serve the rich; on the contrary, in the Holy Church, the rich are only admitted on condition of their serving the poor; for those that are last in the world are first in the Church. "The Church, therefore," says Bossuet, "may be called the city of the poor, as it is the city of God." To the poor was the Saviour sent, to the poor he preached his first sermon. It was the poor who first entered into the Church; it was the poor whom God chose, that they might be rich in faith and heirs of his kingdom. St. Paul besought the brethren to pray for him, that the service which he was about to render to the poor, that is, the alms he was about to give, might be agreeable to them*. With such honour did he revere them! In the world the rich may assume and bear proud titles, but in the Church of Jesus Christ they are only recognised as the servants of the poor†. Observe how this philosophy prevailed in the middle ages. "The Church," says Jona, "wishes to have rich men, such as the Apostle describes, men rich in good works; for the Church understands, by a rich man, one who is rich in Christ; but as for others, they should have no honour among Christians. They are rich at home in gold and silver, but in the Church they are beggars‡." It is most curious to observe how in these ages the love which men entertained for the beauty of the divine temples induced them to labour with

* Rom. xv. 30, 31.

† Sermon sur l'éminente dignité des pauvres dans l'Eglise.

‡ Ionæ Aurelianensis Episcop. de Institutione Laicali, Lib. I. cap. 20. apud Dacher. Spicileg. Tom. I.

constant diligence in order to qualify themselves for entering them ; so that to this end they strove with as much care as men now seek to heap up temporal riches to support their living in the secular courts. They cared not if they were beggars in the world's eye, if they were conscious of having sent that treasure before them which they might hope to find

When that the two assemblages shall part,
One rich eternally, the other poor *.

Hereafter we shall have occasion to shew in detail, how, under the influence of the Church, a multitude of institutions arose to minister both to the spiritual and material wants of the poor, founded too without gold or silver, but with prayers and fasting, and meek humility ; but of these, one instance must be sufficient for the present, to give an idea of the spirit which animated them all.

In a letter of St. Theresa written to Father Dominick Bagnez, there is the following sentence : “ Be assured, Father, that it is an occasion of the greatest joy to me whenever I receive sisters who bring nothing with them to the convent, whom I receive for the love of God ; I wish I might receive them all in this manner †.” There is at present before me a task which might seem to some very difficult, to shew that the influence of this philosophy was diffused in some degree even over the rude and troubled scene of civil society. There exists a long letter from Pope Gregory the Great to the sub-deacon Peter, who had been charged with the administration of the goods of the Church of Sicily, in which the Pontiff desires him to attend minutely to the interest of the rustic population, and to abolish various customs

* Dante, *Pur.* XIX.

† *Vie de S. Thérèse*, par de Villefore, Tom. I.

which oppressed them, and which he adds, "he detests altogether *." Guizot observes that these prescriptions of benevolence and justice will explain why the people were always so anxious to be placed under the domination of the Church, for that the lay proprietors were then very far from watching so carefully over the interest of the inhabitants of their domains †. This is a just observation; but yet it is no less true that the principle of respect being due to the poor, was forced by religion even upon the secular society. The famous ordinance of Louis le Hutin for the enfranchisement of the serfs began thus; "Since according to the right of nature, every one should be born free, and that by certain usages and customs, which have been introduced and kept from great antiquity in our kingdom, and that by adventure many of our common people are fallen into condition of servitude which greatly displeases us; We, considering that our kingdom is called the kingdom of the Franks, and wishing that the thing should in truth agree with the name, by deliberation of our great council have ordained, and do ordain, that generally throughout our kingdom, as far as in us lies, and in our successors, such servitudes should be abolished, and that freedom should be given on good and agreeable conditions to all those who are fallen into servitude, either by origin, or by marriage, or by residence ‡." Guizot says, speaking of this ordinance, that in our age the emperor Alexander would not have dared to publish a similar ukase in Russia: he would not have dared to proclaim that, according to the right of nature, all men should be born free §. In these ages, life was all in harmony with itself, and poetry, united with do-

* S. Greg. Epist. Lib. I. 44.

† Cours d'Hist. Mod. IV. 8.

‡ Ordonnanc. des Rois, T. I. p. 588.

§ Cours d'Hist. IV. 8.

mestic manners and with social activity, was a source of consolation to the poor as well as to the rich. The greatest part of men's time was not devoted to business and speculations, and to what is now called the positive of existence, while only some rare hours belonged, as a privilege, to a select few, during which they might procure emotions by purchase, at a theatre or in a library : and how small is even this privileged number ! A late French writer makes this reflection : " The immense majority," he remarks, " are delivered over to labours which nothing ennobles, to cares which nothing can console." There is no more servitude we are told ; the emancipation of the people is accomplished. Well, but liberty alone is not sufficient for man ; it can be only a mean, never an end. Witness the savage ; he is free, and yet what is he ? In the middle ages the social state was no doubt imperfect ; Christianity had not terminated her work, but was it not better to be one of the people then, than to be so now in the nineteenth century ? Was there not more movement around him, and did he not participate in it in a manner more immediate and direct ? He was a serf, it is true, but now is he not a workman ? The first held to something ; a moral tie attached him to the family of his master, to the castle whose old towers protected him as they had his fathers ; to the Church at whose door he assumed all the dignity of a man and of a Christian, and which offered an inviolable asylum against the power of the world. Around him all was animated ; his habits, his labours, his privations, his perils, were all connected with ideas in which he had faith, and for which he would have died gladly. Behold that great sensation caused by Peter the Hermit, and by St. Bernard. Harken to the voice of these millions of obscure priests, who are each a power, and who like Foulques de Neuilly, Martin Litz, Herloin, Eustache de Flay, &c. repeated

throughout Europe the words which Rome was addressing not to kings, but to Christianity at large. It was in speaking to nations, and in stirring up all the popular convictions, that Urban II. made himself be understood at Clermont, and it was by speaking the same language that Innocent III., Innocent IV., Gregory IX., Pius II., and so many other great Pontiffs, kept alive the sacred fire and enthusiasm, which was to preserve the Christians of the east. It may be observed that all the negotiations of Rome, purely political, to determine kings to bear assistance to the Christian colonies of Asia, and afterwards to the Greek empire, when it was menaced by the successors of Othman, were ineffectual against the rivalry of interests or the implacable enmities of courts; but when the Popes, afflicted by the sad news which came from the Holy Land, shewed to the Christian people their brethren of the East, struggling against the sultans of Egypt and Damascus; when they endeavoured to excite their sympathy for the young colonies of Edessa, Tripoli, and Antioch, founded at the price of their fathers' blood; and, above all, when they made Jerusalem speak, Jerusalem, again polluted by the infidels, then were kings borne away by the people, and obliged to yield before the will of the devout and heroic multitude. Their political combinations could not resist the murmuring population, which demanded an account of their delays. It was not from the circle of courts, but from the heart of countries, that proceeded those cries of enthusiasm and of faith, "*Jérusalem! Jérusalem! Dieu le veut! il le faut *!*" So then it was not merely in the decline of the minstrel's art that the wandering harper might

—Tune to please a peasant's ear,
The harp a king had loved to hear.

* Le Correspondant, 43.

For there was an union of feeling and even of taste, and a community of enjoyments among the high and low. The same poet, who devoted his genius to instruct princes and nobility, paid an equal regard to the wants of the poor, of artisans and country labourers, who are all severally addressed by Simon Bougouine, in his famous Poem of the Young Prince conquering the Kingdom of Good Renown*. John Bouchet, who wrote so many chivalrous books, in his Epistles gives instruction to all classes of men, from the throne to the cabin: the ploughman is taught with as much detail as the prince; the knightly author disdains no state, not even that of the young scholar in the University of Poitiers, nor that of the printer and bookseller†. The gentle Symphorien Champier also, in his “Nef des Princes et des Batailles de Noblesse,” gives instruction, useful and profitable, to all kinds of people, to teach them how to live and to die well‡. In fact, there is no feature of the heroic character, in the middle ages, of which we find more explicit notice, than its Christian affection for the poor, and its scrupulous delicacy in defending them from injustice, as in the instance related by Don Diego Savedra Faxarda, of the king, Don Alonzo VII. who no sooner discovered that an outrage had been committed upon a poor labourer by a certain noble, than he flew in disguise with such speed to inflict punishment, that it was executed before the guilty oppressor knew that he had been discovered. Don Fernando, the Catholic, did nearly the same thing when he set out secretly from Medina to Salamanca, where he seized Rodriguez Maldonat, who had been guilty of oppression in the fortress of Monleon§.

The very maxims of nobility had a tone of spiri-

* Ge get, Tom. X. 169.

† Ibid. X. 216.

‡ Ibid. Tom. XI. 303.

§ Mariana, Hist. Hisp.

tuality, which had been infused into them by the Catholic religion, and which tended to soften the distinction between rich and poor. "Nobility," says the knight, who argues with the clerk, in a famous book of chivalry, "proceeds at first from nobleness of manners and virtue. Richesses ne peuvent toller ne donner noblesse; car richesse sont de soy viles; et ce qui est vil ne peut aucun nobiliter;" and riches are vile, because he who hath them "est toujours angoisseux et en soucy*."

But whatever may be thought as to the political situation in these ages of the poor, to whom is promised a spiritual, not a material recompense, there can be no doubt but that the sentence from the mount was fully verified, which pronounces them to be blessed. The moderns, indeed, would hear poverty speaking in her own defence, with far more impatience than did Blepsidemus and Chremulus. Nevertheless, her arguments, as stated in that old play, are unanswerable, even in the school of political economists. The best answer that they can make to her, would be in the unblushing confession of Blepsidemus,—“Truly, by Hercules, I wish to be rich and to feast with my children and my wife, and then, washed and adorned, proceeding from the bath, to spurn at labourers and at poverty †.” “The rich man,” as is observed in the Platonic dialogue, “has power to commit crimes which the poor man is prevented from accomplishing; the powerful can commit crimes which the infirm are unable to act; riches and power are therefore evils, so far as they give means of operation to the will which is inclined to evil ‡.”

When Zeno heard that the ship was lost, in which was all his property, he said,—“You do well, O

* Le Songe du Vergier.

† Aristoph. Plutus, 613.

‡ Eryaias.

fortune, driving me to the scrip and to a life of philosophy * !” O, how deeply were these truths felt by Christians in ages of faith ! and with what sweetness and conviction are they expressed by them ! Will you hearken to one of that family whom the cord girt humbly ? “ The falcon, when she is too full, will not know her master : so it was with the prodigal son. Riches did separate him from God, and poverty brought him home again.” This is what Father Diego de Stella remarks, in his work on the Contempt of the World †. “ Contemplate our Lord,” says St. Bonaventura, “ seated at the well, waiting for the return of his disciples with food, and see with what humility and condescension he speaks to that poor woman of Samaria, and contemplate his frugality ; for the disciples were to return with food, but where was he to eat it ? At the side of the well, or by a stream or fountain, and this you may believe was his custom, through poverty and simplicity of life. He had no exquisite dainties, no curious vessels, no delicate wine, but pure water from that fountain or rivulet ‡.” The ancients, even in their blind unhappy state, were yet sensible of the blessedness of the very circumstances which are now deemed the evils of poverty :—

Yet was their manner then but bare and playne ;
For th’ antique world excesse and pryde did hate,
Such proud luxurious pompe is swollen up but late.”

“ It seemed,” as Cicero says, “ an evident thing, and nature herself daily taught them, *quam paucis, quam parvis rebus egeat, quam vilibus §.*” There

* Plutarch, de exsilio.

† On the Contempt of the World, by F. Diego de Stella, of the order of St. Francis ; translated from the Spanish. St. Omers, 1622. Part i. 87.

‡ Meditationes vitæ Christi, cap. xxxi.

§ Tuscul. V. 35.

was the supper of Xenocrates, which was enough to teach men that they had no need of riches, and that bribery could not stain their souls *. The laws of Crete, given by Minos, or by Jove himself, and those of Lycurgus, as Cicero observes, trained youth to virtue by labour, and hunger, and thirst, and cold †. Plato introduces a speaker, who praises the discipline observed by the Lacedemonian youth, and expressly commends their practice of going barefooted in winter, and of their sleeping under the stars without a bed, and having no servants to wait upon them, wandering over the country by night and by day; and in reply to the question of an Athenian, he says that “valour and a manly spirit are not evinced merely by resisting fear and pain, but by overcoming desires, and pleasures, and luxury ‡.”

Is it not strange that men professing to be Christians should attempt to condemn the same state of manners, when resulting from Christian discipline, poverty and simplicity? “The best discipline for the body,” says Plato, “is that simple and Homeric economy, which corresponds to the tone of the simplest music, ἡ βελτίστη γυμναστικὴ ἀδελφὴ τις ἂν εἴη τῆς ἀπλῆς μουσικῆς; for simplicity in music produces temperance and wisdom in the soul, and in gymnastic discipline, health in the body §.” The learned physicians of the middle age came to the same conclusion. Cardan describing the great importance of moderation, and even austerity as to food and drink, observes, that it is by such discipline that the manners of youth can be preserved from evil, and adds a remarkable allusion to the custom of his time, saying,—“This may be easily seen in the children of nobility so well brought up, merely on account of this spare diet, for it is not by stripes

* Tuscul. V. 32.

† De Legibus, Lib. I.

‡ Ibid. Lib. II. 34.

§ De Repub. Lib. III.

that they are restrained. I have never seen a young person abstemious in food who perished, unless through an accident; but such boys, when otherwise well brought up, generally arrive with glory at great old age *." These habits were called into constant exercise by the ordinary engagements of life. Thus, when Madame de Chantal used to be on a journey, she always chose the poorest houses for her lodging; she used to eat with the poor of their common hard fare, and thus found sources of spiritual perfection, in the very circumstances which fill our modern travellers with such bitter disgust †.

The sons of noble houses did not attempt to introduce the luxurious banquets of a city among the wild mountains and woods, where they loved to dwell. They would have used the words of Tityrus to their welcomed friend,—“How sweet to rest here with me this night under the green boughs, and partake of fruit and milk, the fare of these goatherds. And now the smoke rises from the roofs of the distant village, and the lengthening shadows fall from the lofty mountains.”

“There are some kinds of men and families,” says Cardan, “which are altogether immoveable and inaccessible to any suggestion of treason. Such are the German and Helvetian nations, the Cardan family, and others, in towns which educate their children in a hard and simple manner ‡.”

Don Diego Savedra Faxardo, in his *Instruction of a Christian Prince*, uses the coral growing out of the sea as an emblem of beauty and force, to be a model to kings and nobles. Sprung from the midst of the waves, beaten by the tempests, it grows hard in suf-

* *Prudentia Civilis*, Cap. xxxix.

† *Vie de Mde. de Chantal*, par Marsollier, Tom. II. 294.

‡ *Prudentia Civilis*, Cap. lxxiii.

fering, and impervious and fit for the most precious purposes of men, while the rose perishes at the first blast. The effect of the two modes of education was seen in the lives of Don John II. and Don Fernando the Catholic; the one educated in the palace, the other in the country; the one by women, the other among men; the one became despicable to the whole world, the other the object of general admiration. This it was which made Don Ferdinand the saint give a hard and manly education to his sons *. Ribadeneira, in his *Princeps Christianus*, shews that a soft and delicate education is the cause why men are not active and robust, and that the Christian discipline, as observed in Catholic states, tends to produce strong and valiant men, by commending coarse food and raiment, poverty, temperance, and labour †. This may now seem physically untrue, “*Sed nos umbris, deliciis, otio, languore, desidiâ animum infecimus; opinionibus, maloque more delinitum mollivimus ‡.*” In the middle ages, the greatest men did not wish, on ordinary occasions, to be distinguished in dress from the poor. It is easy now to talk of dressing according to our rank, but St. Francis said well, “It is very difficult for those who are arrayed in silk, and adorned with jewels, to put on Jesus Christ §.” Job, David, and all the old saints, did often wear vile apparel, and Christians of old did esteem it wisdom to use it on the ordinary occasions of life. It was this which Dante thought worthy of being remembered in Paradise, where, alluding to the simple dress of the Florentines, he says,—

* The Instruction of a Christian Prince, Lib. I. 29.

† Lib. II. cap. 39.

‡ Cicero, *Tuscul.* V. 27.

§ *Le sacré Mont d'Olivet, ou le Paradis de la Religion du Seraphique Père St. François*, par F. Elzeare L'Archer. Paris, 1614.

I saw Bellincione Berti walk abroad
 In leathern girdle, and a clasp of bone :
 ——— The sons I saw
 Of Nerli, and of Vecchio, well content
 With unrobed jerkin ; and their good dames handling
 The spindle and the flax *.

The great Basil had only one suit of clothes, and all the riches which were found in his possession on his death were a crucifix, as St. Gregory Nazianzen relates. St. Chrysostom lays great stress upon the danger of wearing fine apparel, and shews its inconsistency with the apostolic precept. " I admire," he says, in writing to Olympias, " that admirable simplicity in your dress, in which you have so much resemblance to the poor." The old writers of chivalrous romance are fond of that trait in the great Sir Perceval, that he would never abandon the good hempen shirt that his mother made for him, and their heroes are generally as fond of going without shoes or stockings as Socrates and his friend Aristodemus, of whom we read ἀνυπόδητος αἰεί †. Socrates would go barefoot in frost and snow, and use no other dress but his ordinary one, so that the very soldiers thought that he did it to shame them. This was the spirit of our great heroes. Charlemagne, who hated distinction in dress, used to complain of being obliged sometimes to wear a cloak made more for decoration than use. " Of what use are these little cloaks ? We cannot be covered by them in bed. When I am on horseback they cannot defend me from the wind and rain, and when we retire for other occasions, I am starved with cold in my legs ‡." If in our times there should be any one among the great like Vespasian, not distinguished in dress from persons of the lowest rank, there is too often reason to fear that it will only be as Tacitus adds, " Si

* Canto XV. † Plato Symposium. ‡ Chron. S. Gall.

avaritia abesset, antiquis ducibus par*.” It was the same with respect to the employments in which men of all ranks were willing to engage. The sons of kings and nobles served at the table of their fathers or lords, and were ready to discharge any office, however servile. There was but one word to signify the servants who rubbed down the horses, and all young noblemen under the dignity of knight, both being called from the stable or the shield which they carried for their master. Albertus Magnus places it among the signs of true humility to converse with poor companions, and assist them in their work, and follow their customs†. And the sons of our great Catholic ancestors thought this no dishonour. They never forgot the discipline of their college, where no distinctions were allowed on account of birth or fortune. St. Bonaventura, general of the order of St. Francis, and the seraphic doctor, was washing the vessels of the convent when they came to present him with the hat of a cardinal; which he caused to be hung upon a hook in the kitchen until he had finished his employment‡. This sounds strangely, but there is never any justice in drawing an inference from the thoughts and manners of men in these later times, when we are endeavouring to estimate the minds of Christians in ages of faith. It would be far safer to have regard to what was done by several of the wise ancients, who, as Alcibiades said of Socrates, seemed always to despise what the world most esteemed, riches and honours, so that he never appeared aware whether a man were rich, or had any public honours or privileges, for which the multitude might count him happy, but he thought all these possessions to be worth nothing, and that we ourselves were as nothing, and in this manner did he spend his whole

* Hist. Lib. II. 5.

† De Paradis. Animæ. c. 2.

‡ Le sacré Mont d'Olivet, 648.

life, always indulging in irony, and playing as it were with the thoughts of men*. But with our simple ancestors, possessing that spiritualized mind, which was able to put almost every thing around them in harmony with truth, there was the disposure without the necessity for concealing it under a form of disdain. The very circumstances of affluence, of men with whom

————— life and time
 Ring all their joys in one dull chime
 Of luxury and ease,

could excite no envy where there existed the faculty of appreciating the beauty of spiritual good, for it is in proportion as men are imbued with matter that riches become so powerfully attractive. Amyot says in his *Breviaire*, "that one can know by the countenance of a man whether he loves money or not." This is, in fact, the love which makes so many countenances hideous and almost fearful to behold. In the ages of faith, to be known to love money, or even to possess it in any extraordinary degree, would have been no recommendation to love and friendship, and to all that made young and generous hearts beat high.

In truth, in a Catholic country, where the sons of the rich behold the generous and amiable manners of the rustic chivalry among whom they spend their youth; where the noble has learned to weep over the sad tale of many a poor companion, and to sing to himself those plaintive songs which are so sweet and wild, that the traveller oft stops on his road, by the meadow's side, to hearken to them, and to wonder at the melodies of the poor—the simpler and lower ranks of society are so estimable, that noble natures will often seek to be confounded with them, and to con-

* Plato Symposium, 33.

ceal even from others those very distinctions of wealth, which are brought forward with such haughtiness under all other circumstances of human society. The Catholic form of life tends necessarily to keep the hearts of men susceptible of all the innumerable, gracious, and beautiful harmonies of social relation. To Nature's unclouded eye, the manners of the rich and dissipated seem so full of affectation and selfishness, that they are wondered at as a spectacle, not admired as a model of imitation. And even by the influence of this general impression, the rich are at length delivered from the delusion of vanity, so that they would now as anxiously court community with others, as formerly they would have shunned it. Such beauty is there in the simplicity and modesty of nature. For human life, when restored and spiritualized by the Catholic religion, is full of grace and loveliness. There are a thousand expressions of goodness, which are only destroyed by the absurd vanities of the rich and haughty. There are forms of moving, even tones of voice, which breathe joyous simplicity and angelic innocence, and which young hearts would not exchange for the wealth of worlds. Hence, in relation to the fine arts, it is the poor who almost always have the feeling and the sentiment of beauty, which is the source of genuine taste, though in them it may often remain rude and imperfectly developed; whereas the rich, by luxury and pride, have often lost that feeling and sentiment, though they may vainly attempt to supply their place by assuming the conceit, the tone, and the phraseology, of the insolent connoisseur. The simple, virtuous poor are men of first thoughts: the sophists and people of the world, who deem themselves so knowing and enlightened, are men of second thoughts. The profound sages and learned holy Christians, are men of third thoughts, which only bring them back to the first, convinced of the vanity and emptiness of

the intermediate stage in their intellectual progress. It is the poor who have the most lively sense of the beauty and solemn grandeur of the holy ritual of the Church. It is they who are sure to catch the tender mystery. Jacob, indeed, was the son of a rich man, but, as St. Jerome observes, it was when he was going into Mesopotamia alone and naked, with staff in hand, and when, being wearied on the road, he lay down; and he who had been educated with such delicacy by his mother Rebecca, had now a stone for a pillow to his head; it was then that he beheld the ladder of angels*; and as an old writer says of Jacob sleeping thus on the ground, "who would not have had his hard lodging, therewithal to have his heavenly dream?" And observe too, that where such sentiments prevail, the real wants of nature are sure to be supplied. "Ubi caritas est, etiam exigua sufficiunt," says Ardo, in his Life of St. Benedict, Abbot of Ania. Love knows no distress of poverty; and let it be remarked also, as a general rule, that almost always, whatever costs the least is the most conducive to health, and even to beauty. Riches cannot procure the blessings which belong to love and innocent simplicity, in a Catholic land, where a sweet look is of more avail than a long purse. The rich are amazed on entering it, to find how indifferent men seem to their stern orders. It is not there that they would be able to quote their favourite maxim, which they seem to have learned from Bacchus, who cries out in the shades, when he hears that Charon will ferry him across for two oboli,—

Φεῦ! ὥς μέγα δύνασθον πανταχοῦ τῷ δὴ δόλω †.

Their two oboli will not go so far here as with their own unhappy people, whom they have debased, and as it were imbruted, in matter. It would be endless

* Epist. XCII.

† Aristoph. Ranæ, 141.

to produce instances of the ennobling influence of the Catholic religion upon the minds and manners of the poor. The historians of Italy, (though it is not in history that we should look for such records), relate numerous cases of the highest generosity and heroism evinced by poor peasants, and labourers in cities, which prove how completely the humbler classes may be exalted to the highest intellectual and moral dignity*. Assuredly, in a Catholic state, Virgil would have found another term for his husbandman besides "greedy †." What pure and noble chivalry, even when extravagant, shewing a root of goodness, appeared in the brave and pious peasants of the Bas-Maine, as related in the later histories of France! The brother of John Chouan dies "because he will declare his real name to the enemy; he does not know how to lie, for he has never lied."

But if such was the condition of the poor in all these respects, which might seem earthly and temporal, how must it have been blessed in regard to purely heavenly interests, and to those that are spiritual and eternal! *Beati pauperes*. And here I will forget all the blessedness which we have hitherto ascribed to that condition in ages of faith, because so far it may seem allied even to the choicest goods of this present life. But let us view them even in the most extreme bereavement, as described by Dante, among the blind and poor, who

Near the confessionals, to crave an alms,
Stand, each his head upon his fellow's sunk,
So most to stir compassion; not by sound
Of words alone, but that which moves not less,
The sight of mis'ry ‡.

What a wretched state is here to the eye of flesh!
Yet prejudging men, the world, is blind; that world

* See, for instance, *Matt. Villani, Lib. X.*

† *Georgic, I. 47.*

‡ *Dante, Purgatory, XIII.*

from which you come ; but enter the sanctuary, and perchance

—— That sweet strain of psalmody will give ye
Light which may uncloud your minds *.

Perchance you will learn to see, that even this is blessedness,

For those who live that life, which is a race
To death.——

So thought the holy Fathers, who drew their wisdom herein from experience. For what avails it to come to the churches like the men of whom St. Ambrose speaks, who are wholly of earth, and occupied with its interests; who come now, *non quia ex fide Christiani sunt, sed ne Christiani ab hominibus non putentur?* who have always an excuse for themselves on account of the season or circumstances of their life, not to obey the Church. For when a fast is appointed in the summer months, they say, "The day is long ; we cannot bear thirst ;" and in the winter, "The cold is severe ; we cannot endure hunger." Thus these rich men, whose soul is always bent upon dining, seek reasons for themselves why they should always dine, and to excuse themselves from fasting, accuse the seasons of the Creator. In like manner, when you ask them to give any thing to the poor, immediately they object to you that their necessities are infinite ; they cannot pay the taxes ; and they become so eloquent, that you seem to be almost a culprit for having wished to admonish them : so little do they understand that the greatest of all necessities is that of salvation †. With what a different mind do the poor frequent the divine courts ! The poor : to behold whose sweet and saintly countenances, at moments of devotion, the artists, as at Rome, repair to the churches ! For

* Dante, Purgatory, XXVIII.

† Serm. XXXIX.

in the Churches, before the divine altars, or following those that walk and sing solemn litanies, in the delight and transport with which all their senses minister to the soul, is already partly fulfilled the promise from the mount, that their's is the kingdom of heaven. To the Church they repair humbly at morning and at eve, enjoying that privilege which was felt to be so great by David, that he said, in allusion to it, "One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, and visit his temple." Here they were inebriated with the fatness of his house, and were given to drink of the torrent of his pleasure *. And where were the rich and lofty ones the while ? What was their felicity ? Restless and in want, they were driven abroad to the theatre, to the proud assembly ; they were at home in their palaces, satiated and weary with splendour and dissipation, saying, like Theseus in Shakspeare,—

Where is our usual manager of mirth ?

What revels are in hand ? Is there no play

To ease the anguish of a torturing hour † ?

And remark too, with St. Chrysostom, that "it is the rich and prosperous who condemn Providence, in affected pity for the sufferings of innocence."

Strange to observe, the French sophists of the last century confessed this of themselves. "It is from the midst of voluptuous prosperity," said Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, "that these murmurs against Providence issue. It is from these libraries, so filled with light, that the clouds rise up which have obscured the hopes and the virtues of Europe ‡." "It is not Lazarus," says St. Chrysostom, "that pronounces such blasphemy. He would have shuddered at the thought of it. Is it not revolting, then, that

* Psalm xv.

† Midsummer Night's Dream, V. 1.

‡ Etudes de la Nature, Tom. I. 158.

while those whom God has visited with all kinds of misery, bless him and give him thanks, you, who are only bare spectators of the combat of humanity with suffering, should thus blaspheme against Providence? For if the sufferer should for a moment give way to grief, and utter some guilty words, there would seem to be some excuse for him; but that another, who is a stranger to the sorrows of life, should lose his soul and outrage his Creator, condemning things which are regarded by those who endure them as benefits, and a subject of gratitude,—this certainly is inconceivable, and undeserving of pardon*.” Nor let it seem rhetorical, to ascribe such sentiments to those who suffer the extreme of poverty. A great theologian discovered a master of theology in a poor beggar who sat at the door of a Church. This poor afflicted man assured him, upon being interrogated, that he was always prosperous, that he was never unfortunate; that he never had an enemy; and that every thing happened to him exactly according to his wish. *Omnia fiunt ut volo.* The secret consisted in his being contented with his lot; in feeling assured, that whatever came from God was good for him; that no man could injure his soul; and that whatever event befel him, was conformable to the divine will. “*Et hoc unum volo quod vult Deus,*” said he, “*ita omnia fiunt ut volo.*” Therefore this theologian drew a general conclusion, saying, “*Verè sub sordido palliolo sæpe magna latet sapientia †.*”

The father of Thomas à Kempis was a poor rustic labourer ‡. John Aumont, a poor simple peasant of the valley of Montmorenci, composed a treatise on prayer, which was approved of by the doctors of

* Hom. IV.

† Drexelius de Conformitate Voluntatis Hum. cum Divina, Lib. II, cap. 1.

‡ Vita Ejus, cap. 5.

Paris : he died in the middle of the sixteenth century, in the odour of sanctity*. The parish of Stains, near Paris, produced a peasant named John Bossart, of a very ancient family in that place, who died at an advanced age in Paris in 1752 : he was of such piety and goodness that the curate of the village wrote his life. Persons of the first quality used to visit him out of respect to his virtue †.

The ingenious tenderness of divine Providence does not even exclude the poor from the full benefit of making offerings to God. The widow's mite was received and applauded. "O thrice happy woman, and covered with glory!" cries St. Cyprian, "to have deserved even before the day of judgment to be praised by the mouth of the Judge ‡." "Who knows not that the offerings of the lowest persons are most grateful to God?" said Gerson. The self-called reformers, those enemies of the poor, as the result quickly proved, were so absorbed in matter that they overlooked this. Fuller cannot consent to go the whole length of their profaneness, but says, "the Magdeburgenses, out of a spirit of opposition to the Papists, do in my mind, on the other side, too much decry St. Peter, causelessly caviling at his words to our Saviour, 'Ecce reliquimus omnia:' what say they had he left?" St. Jerome would have taught them, that though the Apostles, as we read, did only leave their ships and nets, yet did they leave all things to follow Christ, because they offered themselves, which was an offering beyond all the treasures of Darius and Croesus §.

"Abraham was rich in gold and silver, in flocks, possessions, and raiments: he had such a household that on a sudden emergency he could produce young

* Lebeuf, Hist. du Diocèse de Paris, Tom. III. p. 392.

† Id. III. 320.

‡ De Bon. Op. et Eleemos.

§ Epist. XCII.

men to form an army which was able to rout the host of four kings; and yet in his exercise of hospitality he did not give orders to his servants and maidens to minister to the guests, but, as if he had found a treasure, he applied himself alone with Sara to waiting upon them: he stood as a servant to serve supper to the strangers. Hence it was taught that we also should learn not to be content with offering money, but to offer ourselves to Christ, and imitate the Son of Man, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister." This is what St. Jerome says*.

So great, indeed, and numerous, are the spiritual advantages of poverty, that it might even be argued that the general influence of religion during the ages of faith was in some measure owing to the varied and constant application of that moral power which, though it may not have found a place in history, was most certainly exerted by the people, that is, by the vast majority of men who lived in a comparative state of poverty. The poor common people have often been the protection of the saints, as they were of John the Baptist from the fury of Herod, for we read "*timuit populum: quia sicut prophetam eum habebant*†." How often would the foul crew of rich sophists and greedy plunderers of ecclesiastical property, who hold their counsel on the Seine, have overthrown whole churches, but that, like Herod, they feared the people? It is the poor common people too who have the quickest and most judicious sense of admiration for heroic virtue in distress. This is shewn in Homer, when he says, that "when Telemachus, at the close of his address, wept and threw his sceptre to the earth, all the people were moved to pity, but that Antinous, who represented the proud suitors, began to accuse him‡." Nay, the holy poor have often exerted a direct influence upon the man-

* Epist. LIV.

† Matt. xiv. 5.

‡ Od. II. 81.

ners of the great. At Florence, after the defeat and execution of the conspirators, the people, who remembered the blasphemies to which old James Pazzi had been addicted, began to murmur publicly at his having been buried in holy ground. At length a multitude of country peasants repaired to Florence, and required that his body should be removed from the sacred place : it was dug up and thrown into the Arno *. Of a still more remarkable instance there is a monument yet existing, if we give credit to what is reported by some historians of Normandy, for there is a place on the banks of the Seine, opposite Jumiéges, which is called Heulerie, or Jolerie, and it is said that the origin of the name is to be traced from the inhabitants having been accustomed to assemble there frequently in order to express their detestation of immorality, by hissing Agnez Sorel, as the king's mistress, who had retired there †.

CHAPTER III.

So far we have regarded the state of the poor in ages of faith ; but it is obvious that a far wider range is opened to our view in reference to the first circle of beatitude than the mere limits of material poverty, which, after all, may itself, in some instances, be excluded from it ; for “ if humility be not joined to poverty,” as Thomas à Kempis says, “ poverty cannot please God †.” “ Poverty is not a virtue,” says St. Bonaventura, “ but the love of

* Pignotti, III. 6. † Hist. de Jumièges, par Deshayes.

‡ De Tribus Tabernac. cap. 7.

poverty*.”—There may be religious poverty amidst riches, and worldly riches amidst poverty: the poverty of religion, that is, the spirit which is disengaged from the love of riches, distinguished Abraham, Job, David, Josias, in the Old Testament, to all of whom Providence had given great wealth, and the Augustins, the Paulins, the Gregories, and so many other holy bishops and kings and nobles of the Christian Church who regarded their riches and dignities as treasures of which they were only the dispensers for the good of others†. St. Jerome appeals to the example of noble men and rich men then living who had renounced all things for Christ‡. The great possessions which every Christian must renounce are his attachment to creatures and his self-love.

The Church, that city of the poor, as Bossuet calls it, possessed great wealth in these ages of faith. We must shew in what manner this was consistent with that spiritual poverty which is the object of the divine benediction.

From the very first, we know that offerings were brought to the churches, and placed at the disposal of the ministers. The Church had virtually acquired property long before the time of Constantine; for that emperor ordered that all things which had been unjustly taken from the Church, whether houses or lands, should be restored to her, at the same time making it lawful for all persons to leave property to her by will§. After Constantine, in the Greek Church, we find St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Chrysostom urging the duty of devoting tenths to support the ministers of God. St. Augustin, than whom no one could be more pure from all terrene

* *Medit. Vitæ Christi*, cap. 43.

† *St. Bonaventura de Sept. Grad. Vit. Spiritual.* cap. 45.

‡ *Epist. XCII.*

§ *Thomassinus de veteri et nova Ecclesiæ Disciplin. Pars III. Lib. I. cap. 16.*

cupidity, presses upon the laity their obligation to enable those who serve the altar to live by the altar, and warns them to beware lest the silence of the clergy should reprove their illiberality *.” He advises them to reserve some fixed sum for this use, “something fixed either from your annual or your daily fruits,” and he even prescribes tenths †; as does also St. Jerome ‡. The maxim was “*Laïcorum est antevolare cleri necessitatibus.*” Charlemagne, without regard to the remonstrances of several of the clergy, established the system of tithes by law §. The laws of Justinian would not even allow a church to be constructed unless it was also endowed so as to support the clergy ||.

Besides this legal provision, an immense source of wealth was derived from the faith and spirit of the people. Some made offerings through gratitude: thus in the year 1103, Hugue, count of Troyes, published the following letter at a time when he made great donations to the churches. “In the name of the holy and undivided Trinity, I, Hugue, by the grace of God, count of Troyes, after great sufferings and affliction from dangerous wounds, and despairing of a cure, expecting only death; and yet God having granted me a recovery, considering in myself that I have in many ways offended the grace of my God, and that I had justly deserved this penalty for my sins, and acknowledging that I had deserved a still greater; after this great benefit of God in restoring me to health, I have proposed to render him thanks, by giving alms and doing good to some churches ¶.” Others made offerings through fear of God’s judgment. Thus at the close of the

* In Psal. iv. 46.

† Serm. 219, de Temp.

‡ In Matt. xxii.

§ Cap. Car. M. ann. 801. § 39. T. I. Col. 355.

|| Thomassinus iii. Lib. I. cap. 19.

¶ Hist. du Diocèse de Troyes, par Desguerrois, 266.

tenth century, the Church received a great influx of riches, in consequence of the opinion which then generally prevailed, that the world was near its end. I cannot refrain from observing here that the moderns need not make this a ground of triumph, for so far is this fact from being favourable to their views, that it is on the contrary one which reflects the highest honour upon the spirit of men in these ages. For what must have been the holiness and grandeur of that society to which persons of every rank and country offered their treasures, thinking that they were about to appear in a body before the eternal Judge, and that these offerings would recommend their souls to his justice? What must have been the faith and piety of those men who had their hearts thus fixed upon the good of the future and eternal world? When property was given to the Church, it was the practice to add the most solemn imprecations against all who should attempt to sever and convert it from the holy purpose to which it was destined. Thus the charter of Ædnothus to the Abbey of Ramsey, giving to it his estate of Acleia, ends thus, "*Rogamus ergo et obsecramus per Dei terribile nomen, ut nullis omnino hanc terram donet, vel vendat, vel aliquo modo ab eadem Ecclesia alienet; quod si quis fecerit, sit ille maledictus, et alienatus ab omni beatitudine præsentis vitæ et futuræ, sitque ejus commoratio cum dæmonibus in inferno, ubi ignis eorum non extinguitur et vermis eorum non morietur* *."

Long after the change of religion in England, it seemed a horrible and fearful thing to many even who went with it to take any part in the plunder of property which had been so solemnly dedicated to God. Some, indeed, of the rich and powerful agents made no scruple, like Sir John Russel, in making a

* Hist. Ramesiensis, cap. xviii. Gale Hist. Brit. Tom. II.

dwelling-house of the dissolved abbey, and a stable of the church ; but in a vast majority of instances, when the first plunderers had departed on their circuit of destruction, the people durst not take any advantage of what then stood defenceless and open to any invader. The people, as Sir Henry Spelman says, were fearful to meddle with places consecrated to God *. Sir Henry Spelman, in his history of Sacrilege, gives a list of all the peers who were present in parliament on Friday the 23d of May, in the thirty-first year of Henry VIII. when the act passed for dissolving the monasteries, and he shews the calamities which fell upon them and their races : he also gives a list of the abbeys, traces the property through various hands, and shews that the acquirers never prospered. A remark which was repeated by Jeremy Taylor and many of the Protestant preachers, with what consistency, indeed, might have been questionable. Such, then, was the wealth of the Church, and such the mode of its acquisition during the ages of faith. Now one observation suggests itself before we proceed to consider the spirit with which it was received, and the objects to which it was applied. It would seem that the wealth of a particular church, or convent, was only a memorial of its sanctity. Hear the accurate Abbé Lebeuf, “ The reputation of holiness which belonged to the Abbey of Livry, was the cause why Matilda de Cramoël gave to it in the year 1244 twenty acres of land at Berneau †.”

We shall have occasion hereafter to produce many curious instances of a similar kind. At present I pass on to shew the spirit of the Church in receiving this influx of wealth, and the purposes to which it was applied. “ The holy fathers,” says Thomas-

* Hist. of Sacrilege, p. 245.

† Hist. du Diocèse de Paris. Tom. XIII. 235.

sinus, “regarded the accession of temporal goods to the Church as a subject, not of joy, but of religious fear and necessary caution, and even of grief and sadness *.”

In a letter which Alcuin wrote to Charlemagne, he desires the emperor not to require that tithes should be always paid to the clergy. “It is much better to lose tithes than faith: we who have been born, nourished, instructed in the Catholic faith, even we can hardly consent to give the tenth of our goods, and must not the new-born faith, the weak heart, and the avaricious spirit of these people still less consent to it †?” This was his view of their legal enforcement. In the year 813, a council of bishops under Charlemagne grievously inveighed against those who tempted the faithful to endow the Church, and ordered such gifts to be restored to the natural heirs, but it added, “Hoc vero quod quisque Deo juste et rationabiliter de rebus suis offert, firmiter Ecclesia tenere debet.” A certain matron, by name Ammonia, left land and her house to the Church. Stephania her nurse, and Calixenus her son, hastened to Pope Gregory the Great, and exposed their poverty to him, upon which he ordered the land and house to be restored to them ‡. “Why desire gold which cannot help us?” cried St. Ambrose, “the Assyrians formerly plundered the temple of Jerusalem of its gold, but the gold of the Church, that is, the poor, holds out a prey to no one §.” “The tribute of the Church,” says the canon of the Irish Church, in the eighth century, published by Dache-rius “is according to the custom of the province,

* De veteri et nova Ecclesiæ Disciplina, Pars iii. Lib. I. cap. 4.

† Alcuini Epist. XXVIII.

‡ Thomassinus iii. I. 20.

§ Offic. Lib. II. c. 28.

tamen ne pauperes in decimis vim patiantur*.” “The synod decreed that a priest should not receive gifts from any one of whom he did not know the conscience, for as much as the hosts do not profit him, so much do the gifts of the wicked man injure him who receives them †.” The bishop Jona, in his work de Institutione Laicali, quotes as follows from St. Gregory’s morals. “He who gives his external substance to the needy, but does not at the same time preserve his own life from sin, offers his substance to God and himself to sin; that which is least he gives to his Creator, and what is greatest he keeps for iniquity; he gives his property to God, and he prepares himself for the devil ‡.” We may observe that this is not the language of men who only thirsted for the riches of the laity. In like manner, Walafrid Strabo, Abbot of Fulda, in the ninth century, shews that no offering to a monastery or church would be acceptable, unless from men who obeyed the precepts of Christ with a pure heart §. In accepting offerings, the Church had always regard to the purity and innocence, or penitence, of those who offered, whence Epiphanius says in his exposition of the Catholic faith, “The Church admits the oblations of such as have done injury to no one, and done no wickedness, but lead an innocent life ||.” “The offerings of the faithful at the altar were bread and wine, hosts for the Divine sacrifice, testimonies of gratitude for the clergy, and proofs of charity for the poor. The names of those who offered were solemnly read at mass from tablets which were the Diptycha ¶.” Men would

* Capitula Canon. Hibernens. cap. xxx. Spicileg. Tom. IX.

† Ibid. cap. xxii.

‡ Lib. III. cap. 10. Apud Dacher. Spicileg. Tom. I.

§ De Rebus Ecclesiasticis, cap. xiv.

|| Cap. xxiv.

¶ Thomassinus, iii. Lib. I. cap. 12.

not have relinquished the benefits of the Church, if they could have escaped the burden of tenths. The farmer of the farm of Orengis, in the deanery of Montlhery, was declared by sentence, exempt from paying tithes. The curate concluded that he was not his parishioner ; but the farmer not choosing to remain without a pastor, offered to pay twenty livres every year, if he would put him among the number of his parishioners. The offer being accepted, it was approved of by the vicar-general in the year 1660 *.

It is worthy of remark, that in the ages of munificence to the Church, we read of no consequent distress among the people. It was then the well known proverb, “ que donner pour Dieu n’apauvrit jamais un homme †.” Thus, then, did riches pour into the Church. It remains to observe the purposes to which they were applied. Tenths were given to the clergy as shining in their divine mission, as representing Christ, “ quo fit ut eis non frui, sed uti debeant religiose, pie, et parce ‡.”

“ The tithes are to be divided into three portions,” say the canonical rules of Crodogang, Bishop of Metz, decreed in 816, “ one for the ornament of the church, another for the poor and for strangers, which is mercifully to be dispensed with all humanity ; the third part for the priests themselves §.” St. Ambrose says to Symmachus, the champion of the Pagan Temples, “ the Church possesses nothing for herself but faith ; the possessions of the Church are the expenses of the poor. Let the Pagans count how many captives their temples have redeemed, what sustenance they have given to the poor, to what

* Lebeuf, Hist. du Diocèse de Paris. Tom. XII. p. 38.

† Desguerrois Hist. du Diocèse de Troyes.

‡ Thomassinus, Pars iii. l. cap. 4.

§ Crodogangi Regula Canon. Cap. lxxv. apud Dacher. Spicileg. Tom. I.

exiles they have afforded support *." Thus, at the council of Rheims, in 596, those who retain the goods bequeathed to the Church are styled murderers of the poor †. Hence in the time of Charles the Bald, while many seculars had taken possession of ecclesiastical property, and were expending the goods of monasteries and churches in secular pomp, some of them proceeding to justify their conduct by representing that riches were a poison to the Church, to their specious argument the fathers of the sixth Council of Paris replied in these terms, "It is right that the pastors of the churches should possess the goods of the Church not be possessed by them, and, as Prosper wrote, they ought, while possessing, to despise them, and not possess them for themselves, but for others. It is certain, that the most holy pontiffs who will reign with Christ their Remunerator, whose place we that are unworthy hold, possessed the goods of the Church, not for themselves, but for others; not for their own glory and delight, but rather to the honour of God and to the advantage of the faithful. Let cease, therefore, that ambition which is accustomed to say that the Church of Christ has too much wealth; and let it observe, that however great may be the riches of the Church, so long as they are dispensed in the manner in which they ought to be dispensed, they are never too great."

Mabillon relates, that in the monastery of Cluny, in one day there was a stipend given to 17,000 poor, as is stated by Udalricus. In fact, it was one and the same thing to give to the poor and to give to the Church, for all the substance of the Church was the patrimony of the poor, and the money intended for the poor was, therefore, committed to the Church; and this will partly explain why Constantine desired

* Epist. XXXI.

† Hist. de Reims, par Anquetil.

that the clergy should be exempt from paying taxes*. In the primitive Church, the bishop was the sole dispenser of the goods of the Church, by the hands of the deacons. Thus we read in the Apostolical Constitutions, which are of great antiquity—"It is for you, O layman, to contribute liberally; it is for the bishop, as the steward and administrator of ecclesiastical matters, to dispense. Beware, however, lest you wish to call the bishop to account; and do not watch his dispensation, in what manner he expends it, or when or to whom, or whether well or otherwise; for he has God to call him to account, who hath delivered this procuratorial office into his hands, and desired to commit to him this great sacerdotal dignity." Thus we read that St. Cyril of Alexandria, protested against any attempt to call bishops to account†. But while the bishop had the sole dispensing power, he was bound to follow the canonical law of dispensation, and if he swerved from it, he might be summoned to answer before the metropolitan. This law divided the goods of the Church into four parts, one being for the poor, one for the clergy, one for the bishop, to enable him to exercise hospitality, and to redeem captives; and one for the repair of churches. In the cathedrals of Spain, it was a threefold division, to the bishop, to the clergy, and to the repair and support of buildings; for what was received by the bishop and clergy, contributed to the maintenance of the poor‡. To attempt to enter upon any detail as to the distribution of ecclesiastical property, would not only lengthen this present discussion beyond proper limits, but lead me upon ground which I shall have to explore minutely in a future place, when we shall have to review the

* Thomassinus, Pars iii. Lib. I. cap. 16.

† Can. Tom. V. Par. ii.

‡ Thomassinus, Pars iii. Lib. II. cap. 13.

character of the clergy in these ages. Yet before we interrupt the subject, it may be well to give some idea of the extent of ecclesiastical charity, by stating a few instances. When the provinces of Gaul and Italy had been laid waste by the Goths, St. Patiens, archbishop of Lyons, distributed an incredible quantity of corn, which he caused to be conveyed from parts beyond sea. Sidonius Apollinaris congratulates the pontiff upon his munificence. "You sent corn gratuitously to these desolated provinces. We have seen the ways obstructed by your corn. We have seen on the banks of the Arar and the Rhone, not merely one granary which you had filled ; you have filled rather two rivers than two ships *." From the laws of Theodosius, Valentinian and Theodoric, it appears that the Church possessed great ships, but it was for the sole purpose of assisting the poor, by procuring corn and other provisions for them. It was in this manner that the Church of Alexandria, under the holy patriarch John the Almoner, nourished, besides a numerous clergy, 7500 poor. Victor Vitensis says of Eugene, bishop of Carthage, during the Vandal persecution, "He never kept money in his possession, unless it was offered so late in the evening that nocturnal darkness had closed the labours of the day ; he reserved for himself only what was sufficient for the day †." The blessed Honoratus, who, after living in the monastery of Lerins, became bishop of Arles, used to distribute whatever he received without reserving any part even for his convent. Hilary, his successor in that see, says of him, "Exhausta est aliquando dispensationis substantia ; fides nunquam." St. Chrysostom says that laymen must not hold themselves dispensed from hospitality to the poor, because the churches receive them. "Let every Christian have a hospice in his own home, a house in which

* Lib. VI. Epist. 12.

† Lib. II.

Christ may enter. Say this is Christ's room*." The Romans having gained a great victory over the Persians, and taken 7000 prisoners, whom they kept in chains and dungeons, Acacius, bishop of Amida, hearing that they suffered also from hunger, obtained the consent of his clergy to melt down all the gold and silver vessels of his Church, to redeem them from chains and hunger. So they returned back to Persia. "The thing done by Acacius being known, the king of Persia was seized with admiration, that the Romans should labour to conquer in both war and benefits, and the king desired to see the bishop†." When Atticus, bishop of Constantinople, had sent 360 pieces of gold to the Church of Nicene, he advised the priest Calliopus, who was to dispense them, not to give to those who made an art of begging, but to the ingenuous poor. The distribution of corn for the use of the poor, which had been committed to the Church by Constantine through all the imperial cities, was revoked by the emperor Julian, but again renewed by Jovian, his successor, and confirmed by Marcian, from whose edict it appears that whatever was conferred upon the Church was conferred upon the poor‡.

St. Gregory the Great used to give gold and habits to strangers *natalitio apostolorum vel suo*, that is, on the anniversary of his consecration. His wonderful charity is described in detail by John the Deacon, who wrote his life. When the Persians laid waste Syria, vast multitudes of every condition and sex fled to Alexandria, when the holy patriarch, John, received them with wonderful charity, and when some of his clergy asked him what they were to do when men dressed in splendid habits asked alms of them, he replied that he was the dispenser of Christ,

* In Acta hom. 45.

† Socrat. Lib. VII. cap. II.

‡ Cod. Lib. I. Tit. I. leg. xii.

from whom he had these orders, "Omni petenti te da." These are wonderful things, but still more wondrous was the sweetness and humility which accompanied his bounty. On one occasion, seeing a poor person appear ashamed to receive so great a gift, he encouraged him, saying, "nondum sanguinem meum pro te, frater, effudi, sicut mandavit mihi Dominus meus et omnium Christus Deus*."

The sixth Council of Paris, in 829, condemns the accumulation of riches in the Church, because the Church always is in want as long as there are poor in want. In a general convention of abbots in 817, it was decreed that of all the alms which were conferred upon the churches and upon monks, the tenth part should be given to the common poor. In the more opulent churches under Charlemagne and Lewis the Pious, two parts out of three of all oblations were given to the poor, and the third was reserved for the nourishment of the monks and clergy; but in churches which were less rich, an equal portion was allotted to the poor and to the clergy†. The Council of Paris in 1212 enjoined the practice of hospitality to the poor, and at the same time taught, that what was occasionally expended upon the rich might be for the use of the poor, when it propitiated the favour of the rich, and inclined them to love and liberality. Such were the gifts of the holy Vuanus, Archbishop of Hamburg, as appears from the Chronicle of Adam, "Ut ferocissimos reges Aquilonis hilaritate suorum munerum ad omnia quæ voluit, benignos obedientesque haberet‡." When a great famine afflicted Rome, Pope Innocent III. nourished 8000 poor, besides those whom he sustained in fixed houses. On his elevation to the Pontificate he gave

* Vita ejus, cap. 29.

† Conc. Gall. Tom. II. p. 429. Capitulio Carl. Mag. Lib. I. c. 87.

‡ Baron. An. 1013.

to the poor all oblations which came to him from the Church of St. Peter, and the tenth of all other supplies, and also all offerings which were presented at his feet in the ancient manner. It would be endless to relate the charity of the blessed Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, St. Thomas of Villeneuve, Archbishop of Valentia, St. Laurence Justinian, the first of the Venetian Patriarchs, St. Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, &c. The decrees of Cardinal Pole, Legate of the Apostolic see in England in 1566, reminded the clergy of the charge of Pope Gregory to St. Augustin, the apostle of England, respecting the distribution of ecclesiastical goods, that they should be dispensed to the poor, and for the purpose of educating youth in schools, to the glory of God and utility of man; that the ministers of holy Church should be the fathers of the poor, of orphans, and widows*. And the Council of Trent renewed all the ancient canons prohibiting the expenditure of the goods of the Church upon relations and friends of the dispensers†.

When the son of a certain count was elected bishop, Peter of Blois, fearing the temptations that his rank and family would occasion to him, wrote a long letter of counsel to him, "*Ad honorem vocavit te Deus propter onera, non ad multiplicandum numerum familiæ aut equorum, non ad dandas parentibus dignitates, sed ad dandam scientiam salutis plebi ejus* ‡.—*Si quia filius comitis aut consobrinus regis es, manu effusiore teneris expendere, necessitas hæc Christi patrimonium non contingit.*" Yet this very bishop became so charitable and liberal, that Peter himself wished that he would moderate it, or rather regulate it better §.

In the general chapter of the Cistercian order in

* Decreto 5.

† Epist. 15.

‡ Sess. 25. 61.

§ Epist. 20.

1134, in whose churches the splendor of monastic poverty shone most remarkably, it was decreed that the goods of the Church were not to be expended upon the vessels and furniture of their temples, but upon the poor. Yet St. Bernard, even in his censure, furnished an apology for the magnificence of other churches, “*Dicite pauperes in templo quid facit aurum, &c. Expenditur, ut augeatur; et effusio copiam parit. Ipso quippe visu sumptuosarum, sed mirandarum vanitatum, accenduntur homines magis ad offerendum, quam ad adorandum. Sic opes opibus hauriuntur, sic pecunia pecuniam trahit, quia nescio quo pacto ubi amplius divitiarum cernitur, ibi offertur libentius. Ostenditur pulcherrima forma sancti, currunt homines ad osculandum, invitantur ad donandum.*” Well does Thomassinus observe here, after relating the zeal of St. Bernard, of Pope Alexander III., of Hugo Victorinus, and of Peter of Cluny, in condemning the acquisition of wealth in monasteries, “*Cautiously and wisely were these decrees instituted: and yet we ought not to be angry at these holy congregations if, in course of time, other counsels were followed which seemed to militate against them, while they departed not from the rule of piety and sobriety, which they always professed, that each, contented with necessities, might dispense the superfluity to the poor. It is not of such consequence whether the riches of these abbots and bishops were little or great. Virtue is not always a faithful companion of poverty, nor does vice necessarily accompany wealth. It often happens that even heroic virtue arises from wealth; but it is of the greatest consequence that these riches should be dispensed according to canonical custom; and with that practice, they who abounded in riches might have retained all that belongs to evangelical poverty.*” Pope Innocent III., in this age of monastic and episcopal wealth, changed his golden and silver vessels into

wood and earthen, and would not suffer more than three dishes upon his table*. And the Chapter of Rheims went so far as even to sell many reliquaries of gold and silver to contribute to the ransom of king John†. But when Francis I. required the canons of that cathedral to sell for his use many pieces of silver plate belonging to it, saying that he would secure them a rental for the sum obtained, they replied, "that the king might dispose of their treasure, but as for us," they continued, "we should regard as a sacrilege the converting to our own profit any thing which had been consecrated to God." The king was admonished, and restrained his impatience‡.

When the plague and famine desolated Rheims, in the year 1521, Robert de Lenoncourt, the archbishop, refused to abandon his languishing flock : his granaries were open to the poor ; every day he fed three hundred people in his palace, and he made a general remission of all debts due to him§. During the famine in Normandy, consequent upon the wars of England and France, the abbey of Jumièges was a resource for a multitude of unhappy people||. There was another similar occasion in 1538, when the citizens of Rouen would have perished by famine had it not been for the generosity of the same monks¶. At this very time their farms and granaries were pillaged by riotous people, and an order was dispatched to hang a troop of the seditious who had committed this outrage, but the abbot, François de Fontenai excused them, saying, that it was to be ascribed to the distress of the times, and petitioned for them, and succeeded in obtaining their pardon**. An instance of the same kind is related of St. Remi,

* Rainaldus, An. 1216.

† Anquetil, Hist. de Reims, Lib. III. 236.

‡ Id. Lib. IV. 100.

§ Id. Lib. IV. 96.

|| Deshayes, Hist. de l'Abbaye de Jumièges, 61.

¶ Id. 118.

** Id. 118.

who, foreseeing a year of scarcity, had made large provision of corn for the sake of feeding his people. For this action the holy man was ridiculed and reviled by some, who used to say over their cups, "What means this old man, this jubilee priest? (for he had been now a priest for fifty years) does he wish to found a new city?" A mob was collected and inflamed by these leaders; they set fire to the bishop's granaries, which were all consumed when the holy man arrived at the spot. What then think you did he say and do? He alighted from his horse, and as it was the winter season, he approached as near as he could to the fire, as if to warm himself, saying, "A hearth is always good, especially for an old man." This was all the vengeance he took*. In the seventeenth century a troop of four hundred poor people from Orleans, driven out by the civil war, came to Jumièges, and the monks supported them, at the expense of 15,000 livres. I mention this last instance for the sake of repeating the remark of their historian, for he says, that "in consequence of their having received the reform of the congregation of St. Maur, they were enabled to accumulate at the very season of their greatest expenditure: so true is it that austerity and holiness were often the chief source of ecclesiastical riches†."

Thus then we are warranted in concluding from the whole, that the wealth of the Church in these ages of faith, was in its extent, in the mode of its acquisition, and in the rule of its dispensation, consistent with that spiritual poverty which belongs to the attainment of beatitude. But our meditations must not terminate with our enquiries respecting those who lived in external poverty or riches. We must

* Drexelius, de Conformitate Human. Volunt. cum Divin. Lib. IV. cap. 8.

† Deshayes Hist. de l'Abbaye de Jumièges, p. 143.

proceed to examine from other sides in what manner men in these ages corresponded with the injunction from the Mount, following the first counsel that Christ gave ; and the next point of view which offers itself for this purpose, is that which regards their humility, and the manners to which it gave rise.



CHAPTER IV.

WE are arrived at a passage where an opinion must be expressed, that many will deem groundless and extravagant ; but notwithstanding the prospect of such a reception, it must be expressed, though it should overwhelm me with ridicule and the reproach of incapacity, as Socrates used to describe it, coming upon me as if it were a laughing wave, ὥσπερ κύμα ἐκγελῶν.—Be it affirmed then that to one who has studied the history of Christian ages, and the character of the present times, there can be no conclusion more certain, than that the real and practical adoption of the humble spirit in ages of faith is one cause to which must be ascribed, in a great measure, the contempt with which the modern writers are so inclined to speak of them, as it was certainly one most influential in placing them in opposition to those examples of proud glory which men had formerly been told to admire, and to which they have so often in later times recurred with approval and expressions of applause, for different results needs must be the fruit of principles formally opposed. Rome, as the mistress of the Pagan world, and Rome as the capital of Christendom, might be produced as symbolical of the two

opposite characters into which ages and nations, as well as men, individually, may be divided; for as Plato says, "There are the same things, and the same number, in the state, as exist in each separate soul*." Thus in the dark and sanguinary annals of Tacitus, we behold the combats of contending despots, or of the more despotic and capricious legions. We are present at the atrocious triumphs, we see the chained captives, the heads borne aloft on spears; we hear the horrid rattle of the martial car, and the subdued groans of those that read the list of proscriptions which is to complete the conqueror's glory. Or if we look to the condition of the same people at a period more remote, as described by the historians of the republic, we find the same restless humour of perpetual wars, along with an interminable contest between the different orders, which led at short intervals to crimes of the greatest atrocity and horror; we hear of nothing but the camp and the forum; abroad we behold proud and merciless oppression in its most hateful form of affected protection; and at home, the ceaseless war of separate parties and interests, whose mutual accusations sufficiently exposed the delusion of that pretended liberty which could yield such small protection to the majority of the poorer citizens. All this is now changed for the Catholic type of felicity. We now have nothing but images of quiet wisdom, sanctity, and innocence; symbols of infinite love, of divine and everlasting peace, the daily sacrifice, the evening hymn, the sweet music of the pilgrim's litanee, the portals that open to receive the living to joy, and the dirge of requiem, to supplicate rest and deliverance for the dead. The one is the result of the world's theory of grandeur; the other, that of the Christian philosophy; and in ages of faith men

* De Repub. Lib. IV.

were sensible of its superior advantages. Thus it was with a view to this latter kind of greatness, that the humble St. Isidore, when in the article of death predicted to Spain, that if it ever fell from the true religion, it would be brought to ruin ; but that if it persevered in observing it, its greatness would rise above that of other nations, and as Don Diego Savedra Faxardo remarks on this in his *Christian Prince*, from the time that Don Pelayo and his little band of faithful Christians had retired into the cavern of Covalonga, Spain has always increased in grandeur as the reward for its perseverance in the Catholic religion*, that is to say, in the Christian and real sense of grandeur ; for a saint would have wished no other for his country. There will seem to many in this proposition (more shame for human wills disordered), something false or overbold ; but the difficulty may be solved, or the hopeless nature of the mistake detected, by recurring to first principles. The fact is then, (not according to Paley, that there are two opposite descriptions of character under which mankind may always be classed,) but that the Christian faith has created a character which passes from men to nations, and even to ages in the history of the world, and which is diametrically opposed to that of animal, or, as religion expresses it, unregenerated men, whether developed in the lives of men, or in the ages of nations. “ The one,” as the same writer says, “ possesses vigour, firmness, resolution ; is daring and active, quick in its sensibilities, jealous of its fame, eager in its attachments, inflexible in its purpose, violent in its resentments. The other meek, yielding, complying, forgiving, not prompt to act, but willing to suffer ; silent and gentle under rudeness and insult ; suing for reconciliation, when others would demand satisfaction ;

giving way to the pushes of impudence; conceding and indulgent to the prejudices, the wrong-headedness, the intractibility of those with whom it has to deal. The former of these characters is, and ever hath been, the favourite of the world. It is the character of great men," he continues, without observing the opposite idea of greatness in the ages which beheld a St. Louis and a Godfrey on the thrones of the world. "There is a dignity in it," he adds, as if almost acknowledging his own identity with the character he describes, "which universally commands respect. The latter is poor-spirited, tame, and abject. Yet so it hath happened, that with the Founder of Christianity, this latter is the subject of his commendation, his precepts, his example; and that the former is so in no part of its composition." *Beati pauperes spiritu,*

The strains came o'er mine ear, e'en as the sound
Of choral voices, that in solemn chant
With organ mingle, and, now high and clear
Come swelling, now float indistinct away*.

With St. Luke, who places only four beatitudes, and with St. Matthew, who hath eight, the first is that of the poor in spirit, for as St. Ambrose says, "it is in fact the first in order, and as it were the parent of virtues †." The character of the middle ages may be estimated in respect to it by referring to what was taught and believed, and to what was practised. Now it was taught and believed that humility adopted with sincerity and practised in all the circumstances of life, was the basis of all virtue and happiness, of all temporal honour, and of all eternal hopes. The truth of this proposition is so clear, from the slightest acquaintance with the history and learning of Christian antiquity, that one would rather comment upon it

* Dante, *Purg.* IX.

† *Hom. Lib. V. in Luc. 6.*

than proceed to prove it ; one would rather fondly gaze “ upon those patterns of meek humbleness ” which they place before us, than bring forward reasons to believe that they existed. Throughout the whole literature of the ages of faith, we might in vain search for any of those ingenious speculations with which so many modern philosophers have sought to make the Christian rule of life reconcileable with worldly views of grandeur and elevation. It is clear that it continued to be received in the spirit in which it was first proposed, and we see that the whole Christian life in the first ages, when it was confronted with the proud seductive forms of heathen philosophy, was regarded by all men who did not embrace it as a poor servile form of life. Thus in the office of St. Agatha, which the Church reads on the fifth of February, we find that Quintianus, the Roman Prætor, said to her, “ *Nonne te pudet nobili genere natam humilem et servilem Christianorum vitam agere?* ” To which she only replied that the Christian humility and servitude were better than the wealth and pride of kings. There is never any attempt to represent it as reconcileable by any views of human philosophy or of earthly wisdom, with the proud ideal of intellectual greatness which is so flattering to the mere reason of man. If we proceed to examine their doctrines in detail, we find all their arguments and meditations directed to the same end. St. Augustin wonders why Eve should be called by a new name after her condemnation ; and that then, for the first time, she should be styled, the mother of all living ; and he concludes that “ it was on account of her having been humbled and deprived of celestial gifts, that she might feel her own wretchedness ; for humility is the commencement of spiritual life *.”

Nor was it forgotten, that she too, that pure and wondrous creature,

* In Genes.

Created beings all in lowliness,
Surpassing, as in height, above them all,

that she, ennobler of her nature, through whom that spiritual life was to be restored to the children of men, was indebted for her exaltation to the humility which was infused into her spotless soul. "Vide humilitatem, vide devotionem," cries St. Ambrose, alluding to the reply of the blessed Virgin to the angel. "She that is chosen to be the mother, styles herself the handmaiden of the Lord. She is not moved to high thoughts by the promise, but styling herself the servant, she vindicates to herself the prerogative of unprecedented grace." The same mind remains to her throughout the astonishing period which succeeds ; for, as another holy writer observes, on no occasion of the miracles of Christ does she come forward to claim the honour of being his mother *. Let this serve to indicate the mark at which desire in these ages aimed. The facts which so repeatedly present themselves, in the history of the middle ages, of men declining and flying from honours and posts that offered great private advantage, not like the moderns, who sometimes refuse to accept dazzling prizes only from a cool calculation of selfish interests, but from a simple spirit of humility, and desire of obeying the precept of Christ, can best be appreciated by contrasting them with all that the world, before Christianity had beheld in men, placed in similar circumstances ; and also, it must be admitted, with the recognised principles of action which now govern the multitudes which have refused to hear the Church. In this respect, the influence of the Christian spirit, in the middle ages, among the nations of the West, seems the more astonishing, because from the first there was no pas-

* Arias de Imitatione B. Virginis, p. 43.

sion which offered so great an obstacle to its reception as the love of honours and separate distinction ; and there was no offence against heaven, which so soon and so fatally opposed the happiness of the race of men, and the fulfilment of the beneficent and wondrous designs of their great Restorer, as the same passion developing itself in the East. The apostles, James and John, nourished in the school of Christ, the master of true humility, who gave not the pre-eminence to the disciple whom he especially loved, and imbued with his divine precepts, after such a discipline of wisdom and humility, were instigated by their mother to demand from their Lord the privilege of sitting, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom ! “ So hardly,” observes Lewis of Grenada, “ can the thirst for honours and principality be quenched in the soul of man *.” And in the ninth century, the same thirst impelled the learned Photius to invade the see of the illustrious Ignatius, which was the original cause of the most deplorable event that is found in the records of history : for what followed after the lapse of two ages, was but the consummation of that first pride.

If we proceed to the review of manners, and the intercourse of private life, the character of the ages of faith is perhaps equally admirable : all the other good effects, domestic, that would follow from this spirit, one can already see ; for the humility of men then was not a feigned sentiment, such as Sismondi ascribes to them, which he says was united with a most insulting contempt for others. They knew of no such humility, though their invincible patience may have seemed insulting to the pride of irritable spirits. Hear the gentle strains of their soul—
 “ Humble yourself, and with sincerity regard your-

† Ludovic. Grenadensis in Festo B. Jacobi, Concio II.

self below all men. 'And how can I do so,' you reply, 'when the majority of men, rejecting all fear and shame, live in such disorder, from which I turn in horror? What! can I regard myself below these wretches?' Yes, yes, I repeat it: for if you only consider that the men who are the most perverse to-day may to-morrow be more near perfection than you; that if they had received from heaven the same assistance as you have had, they would have led a much more holy life than you have done, and that you would have sunk into much deeper crime than theirs, if you had not been preserved by a more abundant grace; if, I say, you pay attention to these things, you will easily acknowledge, that there is no sinner whom you ought not in justice to prefer to yourself. O, if you knew the secrets of God, how willingly would you yield to others the first rank! With what sincerity of heart would you take the lowest place! With what pleasure would you prostrate yourself at the feet of your brethren! With what zeal would you serve the lowest of them! with what joy would you honour them! with what affection would you obey them!" These are the words of Louis de Blois*. "We owe it to the grace of God," says Father Lewis of Grenada, "that we have not committed all the sins for which we see others punished; for there is no sin that one man commits of which another may not also be guilty†." — The same remark had been made by St. Augustin. Moreover, all ecclesiastical customs, manners, and institutions, which gave a tone to the whole form of society, were framed with a view to eradicate pride from the souls of men. It is only by keeping this in mind, that we can learn to understand the character of those ages, in which all things that we behold are

* Spiritual Guide, Chap. VI.

† In Festo B. Mariæ Magd. Concio II.

of humble seeming. Thus the rules of Crodegange, Bishop of Metz, made by the Fathers of the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, in the year 816, are introduced by the sacred texts which prove pride to be the origin of all sins. “*Ut omnes homines ad amorem humilitatis provocemus, et detestabilem, inimicamque Dei superbiam ab eis retrahamus* *.” Hence, the want of humility was regarded as a sure sign of not having had a regular education. It is true that men were shewn great honour in these ages; but, as Father Diego de Stella says, writing on the contempt of the world, “The honour which the saints of God had, both here on the earth and also in heaven, was not gotten by the seeking of it, but by the flying away from it †.” For their own sentiments were always those expressed by St. Ambrose—“I in royal grandeur, and the cross of Christ in the dust! I in princely courts, and the triumph of Christ amidst ruins! How shall I consider myself redeemed if redemption itself is not beheld!” The humility of the learned in these ages was truly admirable. Hugues, of St. Victor, says, “Wise men learn willingly, though it were a child which showed them the way: they regard not the person who speaks, but the doctrine which he delivers: if it be good, they retain it; if evil, they abandon it.” St. Gregory says, “*Ab omnibus corripitur, ab omnibus emendari paratus sum* ;” and that great doctor, St. Augustin, says, “*Ego et senex et Episcopus, paratus sum a puero doceri*.” The men whose genius and immense learning seemed so sublime and astonishing to their contemporaries, were approached with the utmost familiarity and affection by the youngest and most simple student. In fact, the titles bestowed on them were all founded rather on their spiritual graces than

* Apud Dacherii Spicileg. Tom. I.

† Part I. 122.

on their wondrous acquirements in human science; for these are the men who were known only as the Angel of the School, the Seraphic Doctor, the Master of Humility. If we open their writings, their style is always marked with the utmost meekness, presenting so great a contrast to that of the proud men who now condescend to publish the result of their studies. Whenever they venture to express an opinion of their own, it is in the spirit of that sentence of Ives of Chartres—"Dicent forsitan fortiores, fortiora, meliores meliora; at ego, pro mediocritate, sic sentio*." Even when they had it not in their power to doubt the justice of their own views, they were still far from wishing to propagate them at the risk of that peace, which should be sacrificed to nothing but the truths which bring salvation. Theirs was not the fierce contention of lofty-crested words;—

ὕψιλόφων τε λόγων κορυθαίολα νείκη†;

so that their mere opinions were in this respect Divine, and opposed in their nature to all those of human wisdom, which latter, as Bonald observes, "like the Minerva of the heathens, come out ready armed for battle, from the brain of their founders‡."

"Be not obstinate," says Louis de Blois, "in your own opinions and private judgment. Avoid contradiction, if truth and justice do not oblige you to use it. Yield easily to others. Suffer all the world to correct you and to instruct you, and do you acknowledge your faults with candour§." How many authors offend against this counsel of the middle ages! How impatient are they of censure, while they cruelly insult others in a strain of affected

* Ivi Carnotensis, Epist. CLXXI.

† Aristoph. Ranæ. 818.

‡ Législation Primitive, Tom. III. 268.

§ Institution Spirituelle, Chap. ii. § 4.

politeness ; saying hard things softly, like artful Creon to Œdipus, *σκληρὰ μαλθακῶς λέγων* * ; how tenacious of applause ; how full of themselves ; how quick to reprove those who are not filled with admiration at their works ! they remind one of Pindar's line,

He that breathes humility, secretly rages.

ὁ δὲ χαμηλὰ πνέων, ἄφαντον βρέμει †.

This was Pagan lowliness.

There were, indeed, some traces to them of a gentle character in the writings of the ancient sages, from whom they loved to extract the gold of natural or traditional wisdom. Thus the Athenian, with Plato, in reasoning with the youth who had been so perverted as to affect a disbelief in the Divinity, proceeds to teach him better things, *ἐν πράξει λόγοις*. "We must approach him mildly," he says. *καὶ λέγωμεν πράως, σβέσαντες τὸν θυμόν ‡*. Let no one, he says again, speak any evil of another, but if arguing with any person in a discourse, let him teach and convince the person with whom he argues, and those that are present ; but let him carefully refrain from calumny and opprobrious words ; for from curses and spreading women's tales by the use of shameful epithets, the most heavy enmities take their rise. And it is an ungracious thing to let the soul again grow wild after it has been tamed and made gentle by education §. Thus, too, Pindar describes the first address of Jason, who "instilling a placid speech with a gentle voice, laid a foundation of wise words," *βάλλετο κρηπῖδα σοφῶν ἐπέων ||*. Who need to be told that humility belonged also to the heroism of these grand ages ? When the Turks raised the siege of Clisson, and fled in dismay upon hearing of the ap-

* Sophoc. Œdip. Col. 774.

† Pyth. Od. XI.

‡ Plato, de Legibus, Lib. X.

§ Ibid. Lib. XI.

|| Pyth. IV.

proach of the Christian army under Josselin, though this brave count was carried in a litter to command it, the humility of the Christian hero was nobly expressed in the prayer which he uttered upon hearing of the flight of the infidels. I will give it in the old French of Brother Nicole, because his great work, "*Le Grant Voyage de Hierusalem*," in which he relates it, which yet exists in Gothic letters, was both a history and a book of instruction for secular nobles, so that it furnished means of extending the spirit it so often describes. "He caused himself to be set down on the ground, and then with joined hands, he made this prayer to God. '*Tres doulx Sauveur et Redempteur Jesu Christ sans lequel n'est aucun bien fait, je vous rends graces et mercis humblement de tous les benefices et graces qu'il vous a pleu me donner et conferer tant en guerre que en autres lieux. Et mesmement que de present a moy qui ne suis que ung ver de terre prest a rendre l'esprit, avez fait telle grace de chasser de mon pays ung si puissant prince comme le Souldan de Turquie. Lequel au sceu de ma venue s'en est fuy devant ma face comme l'aigneau devant le loup et tout par une digne vertu, non pas par ma force ne de mes gens d'armes. Et au surplus souveraine Dieu je vous recommande mon ame vous priant devotement qu'il vous plaise la recevoir lassus en paradis.*' And with these words he departed and humbly rendered up his spirit to our Lord*."

We must remember that poverty of spirit, in all the circumstances of its developement, was not unknown even among the great in the worst ages of Christian antiquity. "How many persons, even in these deplorable times," says Lewis of Grenada, writing at the period of the great religious innovations, "how many persons of great quality, generously

* F. cxxix.

despising all the greatness and riches of the earth, have chosen to live despised in the house of God, rather than enjoy the riches and advantages of the world*!" Humility was even embodied and shadowed forth in a multitude of customs, amidst the very pomp of secular courts, of which Dante might have said as well as of David dancing before the ark,

————— in that hap they seem'd
Less, and yet more, than kingly †.

These occasions might serve to explain the saying of St. Anselm, that "perfect humility and perfect pride have some works in common ‡."

The ages of faith differ in no respect more from modern times than in the total absence of that activity in matters of earthly and material interest which is now regarded as the criterion of excellence, whether in an age, a nation, or an individual, and of which the origin is pride. There was not that interminable contest for superiority in rank, riches, or fame, which now keeps every nerve of society in full stress, without intermission, till snapt by some overwhelming destruction. Men were poor in spirit, that is, they were content to obey and follow the will of Providence, and the footsteps of their Saviour.

Dante, in representing the state of blessed spirits in Paradise, borrowed the sentiments which he ascribes to them from the doctrines of the school which had an influence then upon all the thoughts and ways of men, beyond any extent that would now be believed possible. Thus he addresses one of them :

————— Yet inform me, ye, who here
Are happy; long ye for a higher place,
More to behold, and more in love to dwell?
She with those other spirits gently smiled;

* Catechism, Part II. cap. xi.

† Purg. X.

‡ De Similitudinibus, cap. cxxxvii.

Then answer'd with such gladness, that she seem'd
 With love's first flame to glow: " Brother ! our will
 Is, in composure, settled by the power
 Of charity, who makes us will alone
 What we possess, and nought beyond desire ;
 If we should wish to be exalted more,
 Then must our wishes jar with the high will
 Of him who sets us here *."

And besides, in ages of faith, when multitudes of souls on earth clothed in saintly flesh, were each a Paradise, men saw too much of heaven to feel any great anxiety or admiration for earth and its brief accidents. Jacob, after he had wrestled with the angel, remained lame of one of his legs, and was after called Israel, which is as much as to say, " the man that seeth God." " And so," observes father Diego de Stella, who wore the humble cord, " he that seeth and knoweth God must be lame outwardly to the world. If, therefore, thou do see worldly men going carefully and diligently to get honour and worldly riches, do not thou mervle thereat, if they go not lamely nor haltingly about that business, for they have but a small knowledge of God. The just men that do see God, as Jacob did, through the knowledge that they have of our Lord, are, as it were, lame in the knowledge of earthly things, and those doth the world think fools because they be wise before God †."

For the clear and full insight into this mystery we are indeed indebted to the light of the Christian doctrine ; but yet this and nothing else is the meaning of those remarkable passages which so frequently occur in the writings of P'lato, where, on a comparison between the effects of injustice and justice, the advantage is ascribed to the former, and it is shewn to be more powerful, more spirited, and more

* Parad. III.

† On the contempt of the world. St. Omers, 1622. I. 160.

despotic *. Dante, in that passage where he describes the imagery upon the ground in Purgatory, which exhibited various instances of pride recorded in history, does nothing but express the view which men in ages of faith generally entertained of the true nature of national pomp and glory :

————— Troy I mark'd
In ashes and in caverns. Oh! how fall'n,
How abject, Ilion, was thy semblance there !

And the same popular and scholastic judgment, respecting the sinfulness of pride in separate men, is expressed in that passage where he describes the proud loaded with the weight of vast stones that crushed them. Upon first seeing them bent down beneath the dreadful weight, he cried out in astonishment to his guide,

————— “ Instructor !” I began,
“ What I see hither tending, bears no trace
Of human semblance, nor of aught beside
That my foil'd sight can guess.” He answering thus :
“ So curb'd to earth, beneath their heavy terms
Of torment stoop they, that mine eye at first
Struggled as thine. But look intently thither ;
And disentangle with thy lab'ring view,
What, underneath those stones, approacheth : now,
E'en now, may'st thou discern the pangs of each.”
Christians and proud ! O poor and wretched ones,
That, feeble in the mind's eye, lean your trust
Upon unstead perverseness : know ye not
That we are worms †. —————

* De Repub. Lib. I.

* Purg. X.

CHAPTER V.

AND here I must pause awhile, and from this mount, "which healeth him who climbs," look back upon the scenes which so often arrest the early steps of men while conversing with the forms of mundane chivalry. Many, like Stesichorus in classic story, have had, before the course was done, to sing their palinodia. Cornelius Agrippa, practised in every slight of magic wile, lamented his vain labour in books of dangerous science : Erasmus, whose pleasant shafts have often wounded piety, expressed himself afflicted at the result of many of his writings : others, of more antique days, whose names are too venerable to mention here, have left whole books of their retractions ; and, in sooth, whoever has eulogized the chivalry of this proud world, returning unto the holy triumph, may well add himself to the number, and smite upon his breast ; for, although he may hope to have avoided gross offence, yet is there always ground to fear that somewhat has been uttered not in harmony with lowliness, meekness, poverty of spirit,—the weapons of the just, who must conquer by yielding*,—peacefulness, and the awful sanctity of the school of Christ, whose sweet food can hardly then be tasted "without the cost of some repentant tear."

It is true the motive of honour is not always vicious. The doctrine of St. Thomas, the angelic teacher, and of the school is, that honour being despised meritoriously, when we refuse to commit a bad action, in order to possess it, may be also desired with praise, when we commit no evil that can destroy it : but so is also true that sentence which in lower

* St. Ambrosii Officior. Lib. I. 5.

regions is but seldom heard, "Sunt viæ quæ videntur hominibus rectæ, quarum finis usque ad profundum inferni descendit:" and there is an honour to be gained on earth which no favour wins in Paradise. It is not that I am willing to level those images of dignity and grace which so essentially belong to every form of chivalry that presents itself to the young imagination. It is not that I would add my puny efforts to aid those who are labouring to destroy every relic of the antiquated shrine of heroic virtue that has been left in the world. A modern writer, who seems to think, that to understand the spirit of the middle ages it is merely required to observe that of the nineteenth century among the people of the north, says, "the truth is, a very large number of the knights errant, comprising the chivalry of every country, were mere idle adventurers, bent only on the gratification of their own passions and seeking to enjoy life in the easiest and best manner possible." No coarse destruction of beautiful and ennobling thoughts is my object in this retrospect. A son of ancient chivalry was often extravagant, proud, intemperate, sensuous, and yet he was not what our modern sentimental pigmies would represent him; I rather hold with the wiser poet, where he says of his ideal hero,

" Yet in his worst pursuits, I ween
That sometimes there did intervene
Pure hopes of high intent;
For passions link'd to forms so fair
And stately, needs must have their share
In noble sentiment*.

But from this station, on which we now stand to survey the ways of men, one feels the importance of distinguishing broadly between the modern idea of chivalry as an institution self-existing, and the source,

* Wordsworth.

as it is thought, of the greatest benefit to mankind, extending its influence even to our times, (for to this length do many writers now proceed in speaking its praise,) and that which represents it under the forms of Christian knighthood, the humble and constant dependent upon religion, drawing all its excellence from the faith and influence of the Catholic Church, in its specific character and peculiar circumstances, framed only to meet the particular evils which, during a certain period, existed in society, and in its general and primary state presenting nothing but a ground more than commonly favourable to the reception of that religious instruction, without which, its best fruit, however beautiful when seen from far, would be delusive even as the apples on the Dead Sea shore, which, when touched, are discovered to be only ashes and bitterness. It is in this latter sense alone that chivalry can be defended with truth and justice, as being a Christian form of life, and consistent with the first qualification for beatitude. Whereas, in these later times, when men have begun to recur to the days of chivalry with a poetic admiration, contrasting them with the wretchedness and sensuality around them, the system is invariably represented under the former character; and against this manifest error, or rather perhaps this artful invention of proud men, who concert every ingenious measure to deprecate the benefits of that religion whose graces were common to the rich and poor, it is the solemn duty of every Catholic Christian who has ever loved the real spirit of the ancient chivalry, to express his convictions without disguise.

To begin then with the impressive formula of the Homeric heroes :

ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεις σῆσιν·

chivalry was a noble and beneficial mode of life, so far as it was a Catholic mode of life; but out of

those limits it was only one of the many forms in which pride and sin ensnare the hearts of men; it was evil and unholy, and on that ground alone not deserving of the ridicule of which some have thought it the proper object. For, in the first place, to return to that love of honour which is thought to have been its soul, there must be always danger here, not only of forgetting to glory in the cross, but even of falling short of the natural magnanimity of which we find traces in the ancient sages. Thus Crito's argument to persuade Socrates to leave the prison was, that the world would say that he had been neglected and forsaken by his friends, who might have enabled him to escape if they had chosen, but that they preferred their money to their friend. "O good Crito!" replied Socrates, "what is it to us what the world may say? for they who are honest and wise, whose opinion alone is worth considering, will conclude that these things have been done precisely as they have been done*." Cicero, even though he had said man was born for glory†, yet, coming to speak of true magnanimity, bids men remember "*unam esse omnium rem pulcherrimam, eoque pulchriorem, si vacet populo, neque plausum captans, quin etiam mihi quidem laudabiliora videntur omnia, quæ sine venditione et sine populo teste fiunt: non quo fugiendus sit, sed tamen nullum theatrum virtuti conscientia majus est‡.*" And in another place he reckons those who seek glory among the men who are opposed to philosophers§. Codrus, indeed, was really devoted, for if he proposed to die for his country, he was willing to forego the honour, and therefore he took effectual measures to enable him to accomplish the offering of himself, by assuming the habit of a slave. But with men who speak of honour, with

* Plat. Crito.

† Id. 26.

† Tuscul. Lib. II. 41.

§ Tuscul. V. 3.

these admirers, I do not say with the actual possessors of the chivalrous spirit, it is often more the fame than the substance which they regard. It is only a respect for fame which actuates them: they speak in the Homeric style to their own conscience, “if I do so and so, men will accuse me of such and such things; men will say that I am poor-spirited, superstitious, extravagant,”

ὥς ποτέ τις ἐρέει· τότε μοι χάνοι εὐρεῖα χθών.*

Ibycus wrote a celebrated sentence, “I fear lest I should commit an offence against the gods and receive in return honour from men †.” So just a sense had even this heathen of the essence of human honour.

With respect to those philosophers who have of late endeavoured to conceive a purer and more spiritual idea of honour, as a self-existing principle, it seems to the Christian ear as if the subtilty of their words may have only aggravated the evil, spreading a thin varnish over the wide separation between pride and that spirit with which they attempted to unite it, if indeed such an union was in their thoughts; and such seems to be the case in that passage where Fichte says, that the hero whom the world supposes to be influenced by glory, “is only actuated by his own private judgment of right, and that in acting as he acts, he is no way led by the hope of the applause, but that he achieves the act which bursts forth in all its purity within his own mind from the primal fountain of honour, and imposes on mankind the obligation of approving of it and honouring it; that is, provided he takes any thought about their judgment; utterly despising both them and their judgment, in case it is not the echo of that which he himself has pronounced for all eternity.”

† II. IV. 182.

† Suidas.

If this be the only language with which chivalry could prove that it had a humble spirit, the cause must assuredly have been hopeless: but we may believe, that in ages of faith it was often with men in the ranks of temporal chivalry as with the saints; they gained honour more by flying from it than by pursuing it. Among the papers of the Archduke Leopold of Austria, son of the Emperor Ferdinand II., was found certain rules of life which he had drawn up for himself in 1639, on taking the cross of the Teutonic order. Among these we read as follows: "I resolve to have in aversion and hatred of heart, which shall be shewn by my deeds, as far as my condition and profession will permit, all that the world possesses of honour, glory, pride, vanity, ambition, commodity, and power, and I wish to live with great joy in detachment and poverty of spirit, stript of affection for all that the world esteems, that I may possess God alone, my infinite treasure, and that I may be useful to others, desiring, as far as is possible, to follow the example and traces of my Lord Jesus, who was put naked on the cross, for my love *."

Nevertheless, the opening to dangerous abuse was broad. Hear the sentiments of a daughter of Spain, who had once drunk deep of the high spirit of that knightly land. It is St. Theresa who speaks: "As we forgive those, &c., Remark here my sisters, that it is not said, as we shall forgive, but as we forgive; for it is not to be conceived that any one would approach the eternal majesty to supplicate forgiveness, without having previously forgiven all that have injured him. It was for the saints a subject of joy to suffer persecution and injuries, that they might have

* *Les Vertus Héroïques de Leopold d'Autriche*, par N. Avancin, 141.

something to offer to God : but alas ! what can a poor sinner like myself offer, who has so seldom had occasion to forgive, and who has such need of forgiveness ? Let those who have the misfortune to resemble me reflect seriously upon this. I conjure them to estimate, according to their real value, these miseries to which we give the name of insults and affronts ; these false honours of the world, with all these little sensibilities, which are only toys and plays of children, and that in things so vain they may never make a merit of their pretended acts of forgiveness. O my God, my God ! if we did but know the real worth of this wicked honour ! Alas ! there was a time when I esteemed it without knowing what it was, carried away like so many others by the torrent of opinions and customs. What things did I then convert into subjects of trouble and vexation ! With what shame do I now remember it ! Certes, I knew not then true honour, the only honour which is profitable to our souls, the only honour which merits our research. O my Saviour, thou who art at once our model and our master, what was thy honour in this world ? In what didst thou make it consist ? Didst thou forfeit it by thy humility in humbling thyself to death ? No, truly, and so far otherwise, that this abasement, to which thou didst consent, has become for all mankind a source of glory and honour ! Alas ! my sisters. Do we believe ourselves offended at what does not even merit the name of offence, and for having forgiven things which are neither injuries nor affronts, and which are not worthy of being named, do we fancy that we have performed something considerable, and do we suppose that God ought to forgive us, as if in reality we had forgiven others ? O Lord, diffuse light amidst this darkness. Lighten our ignorance ; give us the grace to know that we do not know ourselves,

that we come before thee with empty hands, and forgive us our trespasses only by the effect of thy goodness and thy mercy *."

Again, in another place, resuming her saintly strain:—"O my God, how clearly doth a soul see here the sense of that verse of the Psalmist, and that both he had reason, and that all the world should have reason, to desire the wings of the dove. For it is easily and clearly understood of that flight which the spirit makes, by which it raises itself up above all creatures, and in the first place, from and above itself. But this is a sweet flight, a delightful and pleasant flight, and a flight without noise. What kind of dominion doth such a soul possess, which our Lord doth once conduct to this pitch, that she may be able to look down upon all things without being once entangled by any of them! And how full of confusion will she now be, for that time wherein she was entangled before! And how much will she be amazed to look back upon that blindness of her's! How full of compassion will she be for such as do yet remain therein! She is now much afflicted with the thought of that time wherein she had any regard to the point of honour, and for the gross error wherein she was to imagine that to be honour, which the world calls honour; for she now sees that it was all an abominable lie, and yet that every body lives in the practice of it. But now this soul understands that right honour is built, not upon a lie, but upon truth; esteeming that to be worth something, which indeed is so; and holding that, which indeed is nothing, in no account at all, since all is nothing, and less than nothing, which comes to have an end and pleaseth not God †."

In these magnificent passages, where the piety of a

* The Road of Perfection, Chap. xxiv.

† The Life of the Holy Mother St. Theresa.

saint is expressed in language as noble as that of Plato, he must indeed be slow who does not recognize some shade which did occasionally stain even that fairest and noblest chivalry, which claimed the admiration of mankind. Dante must have had deeper thoughts than meet the ear, when he speaks of having seen in Paradise, though in an inferior star, some good spirits,

Whose mortal lives were busied to that end,
That honour and renown might wait on them :

adding,—

And, when desires thus err in their intention,
True love must needs ascend with slacker beam*.

That some under knightly banners were busied to that end is more probable, than that such spirits could afterwards be raised at once so high. With greater justice does the same poet describe such spirits among the members of the suffering Church, to whom these words are spoken :—

Because ye point your wishes at a mark,
Where, by communion of possessors, part
Is lessen'd, envy bloweth up men's sighs.
No fear of that might touch ye, if the love
Of higher sphere exalted your desire.
For there, by how much more they call it our's,
So much propriety of each in good,
Increases more, and heighten'd charity,
Wraps that fair cloister in a brighter flame †.

Among the stains incident to the chivalrous soul in which its whole spirit is now often supposed to consist, was noted that attention to little sensibilities which St. Theresa describes as only toys and plays of children. Here was a source of bitterness which argued no proximity to the first beauteous circle of sweet life, the beatitude of the humble and the poor.

* Parad. Canto VI.

† Purg. XV.

The heathen portraits were strongly marked with this dark feature. Medea prepares to murder her children most dear to her, to destroy the whole house of Jason, and to commit, as she admits, a crime of impiety and horror, after which life will be intolerable to her, and all this for what reason? She declares it thus,—

Οὐ γὰρ γελαῖσθαι τλητὸν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν, φίλαι*,

the motive that was sufficient to make Sir Walter Raleigh command a number of wretched people to be massacred! Goëthe, in his celebrated drama, entitled *Torquato Tasso*, represents his hero as under the same influence. The quarrel with Antonio would be ludicrous, if one did not pity the agony of the poor victim to his own morbid sensibility. It is a quarrel of Germans, which seems noble to the hero who fancies himself injured, and which fills the dispassionate beholder with alternate commiseration and disgust; so true is the saying, that a man who is not perfectly dead in himself is quickly tempted and conquered in little and vile things †. Now, in opposition to this tone of mind, which is supposed to belong to chivalry, they who would hear a blessed voice, inviting them to the Mount, must be ready to renounce all claim to the honour that waits upon these quick and delicate sensibilities; and as St. Ambrose says, they must be careful never to betray passion by their words, whatever may be the provocation ‡.

Delicacy and nobleness of mind, when well directed, and kept subservient to the ends of piety, were indeed regarded as a great treasure, but it was one which was known to require more than ordinary

* Eurip. Med. 795.

† De Imit. Christi, I. 6.

‡ Off. Lib. I. 4.

direction, and which exposed the possessor to a peculiar danger of incurring guilt and misery ; guilt in forfeiting divine charity, refusing to forget and forgive little things, from which the heaviest enmities so often arise, and misery, in depriving himself of the friendship of others ; for the number of such minds as could comprehend that intensity and delicacy of feeling must have been small, in comparison of those with whom were given a thousand occasions of offence and of saying, “Non irascendum sed insaniendum est.” It was in proud silence, the delicate heart received the wound, whereas if there had been humility to leave a free course to the complaint of nature, the coarse dart might have been extracted, and no interruption caused to friendship and peace. The wise Spaniards say “a cheerful look and pardon are the best revenge for an injury ;” and again, they say, “If thou art vexed, thou wilt have two troubles.” And if, after all, there had been no disposition to make amends, there would have been then an opportunity to remember St. Theresa’s exclamation, and to renounce such vanities, following Christ through sacrifice and mortification. But uncorrected heroes of this noble stamp, who were left merely to nature, were for immediately withdrawing in silence, like Achilles, to sit alone and eat their own heart, under the intolerable pain of outraged feeling and a wounded imagination. Such persons, indeed, were often reminded, that after all, their conduct was only that of the vulgar, of the weakest and basest characters ; and, on the contrary, that it would be a rare and noble testimony to the qualities of their soul, if it could be always said of them, by men of coarser minds, “I can do this, I can break this engagement, give this sign of indifference, for I know that man to be one who never takes offence, or who is always ready to forgive little, as well as great

offences against him." "Grow angry slowly," say the Spaniards, "for, if there be cause, time will not fail thee to become so."

In the sphere of morality this morbid sensibility may have been productive of great evils. It is a just remark of a modern writer, with regard to the mind of chivalry, if we suppose it undirected by religion, that is, taking it in the sense in which men now understand chivalry. "The beauty of the virtue itself," he says, "was lost sight of, under the specious colouring of ambitious fancy. It was not truth which obtained the praises of the chevalier, or which he sought to exhibit in his conduct, but the extravagant imitation of her effects." Thus we have the ridiculous spectacle of these admirers of chivalrous honour pretending to have a greater regard for truth and sincerity, than the saints and the Christian doctors of the school. A great historian of our times, who, in his single instance, seems to have borrowed their language inadvertently, affirms that no defence is available in the case of one who, being innocent and about to suffer the last penalty of an impious law, should, on a review of his own conduct, during the mock trial, persist in maintaining that it was lawful for a man to equivocate, if an inhuman judge endeavoured to force him to accuse himself; but, on the contrary, this is an opinion which has been approved of by the whole Church. Saints, like Athanasius, blessed spirits that may not lie, since they ever dwell near the source of primal truth, are expressly recorded to have acted in conformity to it." The Just One said, "*non ascendo ad diem festum hunc* *," and he meant "manifeste," for he went in secret. The proud Herculean openness which rushes upon destruction, may be esteemed sinful as well as a sign of ignorance and want of just discipline. We

* Joan. vii. 8.

see that there was no direct answer given to the crafty chief priests and elders of the people, who asked by what authority those things were done ; but that in reply, a question was addressed to them, which they could not or durst not answer *. Indeed, the sober judgment of the universal reason has sometimes been able to prevail, even over the extravagant fancies which the moderns seem to regard as inseparable from chivalry. Thus De Argentine, in order to save Bruce, when attacked in the hall of the Island-chieftain's castle, is represented by the poet as pretending to claim the prisoners, in his sovereign's name, as vassals who had borne arms against their liege lord, and then we read—

Such speech, I ween, was but to hide,
His care their safety to provide ;
For knight more true in thought and deed,
Than Argentine ne'er spur'd a steed †.

Yet every barbarous Cyclops would exclaim here,—
“ This is deceit, not manly force ‡.”

The justice, however, of an opposite conclusion was not unknown to the knight of chivalry. Don Diego Savedra Faxardo did not want to be instructed in honour, and yet he proves, in the very book which is to teach honour, that it may be lawful sometimes to dissemble ; appealing to the conduct of David before King Achis §, to Samuel's pretence of sacrifice ||, and to the hair applied to the hands of Jacob ¶, which latter instance, however, is interpreted by St. Augustin as having been a mystery prefigurative of the atonement **. The conduct of Abraham too might have been added, of whom St. Ambrose says, “ Truly, a great man, illustrious, with

* Matt. xxi. 24. † The Lord of the Isles.

‡ Od. IX. 408. § 1 Reg. xxi. 13. || Ibid. xvi. 2.

¶ Gen. xvii. Christian Prince, I. 452.

** Lib. cont. Mendacium, Cap. iv.

many virtues, whom philosophy, with all her vows, could never equal*." But all this is widely different from the spirit ascribed by Homer to his heroes, and even to his divine personages, who are not in error, but in total want as to the principle of truth†.

Another danger to which the chivalrous mind may have been exposed, consisted in men affecting to have higher and purer motives of action than belonged to ordinary Christians, so that in fulfilling a real duty, they appeared to obey only their own will. Of this we have an instance, in the custom of bearing those rings of iron, silver, or gold, which signified that the wearer was the slave of his word. They are described by Olivier de la Marche, Monstrelet, Mabillon, and Ducange, and even by Tacitus, whose testimony to the fact might of itself lead us to trace their real origin. In many instances, however, whatever may have been their origin, the use may have been sanctified. But if this extreme delicacy of the chivalrous mind may have sometimes been an evil, in pushing virtue to extravagance, what must it have been when it made a virtue of indulging, even to excess, some of the most vicious passions of the corrupted heart! Yet it is too true, that it sometimes did so; though by pity may the mind be overpowered, when it hears this affirmed of those dames and knights of antique days. It was only the powerful and incessant action of the Catholic religion, which induced them to renounce the sentiment of nature, as expressed by Medea, when she glories in the crime she is about to commit, and declares that she is of this character, to be terrible to her enemies and benevolent to her friends, adding, that this is the most glorious praise,—

* Lib. de Abraham. Patriarch.

† Odyss. I. 179.

τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων εὐκλέεστατος βίος*.

And so it will always be in the judgment of the world; for it is the sentiment of uncorrected nature which Callicles expresses in addressing Socrates,—“It is not the part of a man to suffer injuries, but only of some slave, to whom it is better to die than to live †.” It was from a far higher source that Socrates drew his maxim, saying, “We must never retaliate by doing evil for evil, and we must never injure any man, though we may suffer ever such great injury from him ‡.” This is not what is now supposed to be the spirit of chivalry, nor what it really is, if we consider it as self-existing and in its primary state; in man, choleric and bloody, in his partner, reckless, spurring others on maliciously to strife. We can form a more correct estimate of it, by referring to that sad picture of the scene in Tantallon hall :—

On the earl's cheek, the flush of rage
O'ercame the ashen hue of age.

Or even to that hero described in Tasso, who, as a hot brand, flames most ere it goeth out.

So he, when blood was lost, with anger wroth
Revived his courage, when his puissance died;
And would his latest hour, which now drew nigh,
Illustrate with his end, and nobly die §.

Such may be an Homeric death, or chivalrous, if men will; but theology would teach us to admire other portraits and other modes of spirits' passing. All this acquires additional force, when it is remembered that the soul may continue under the influence of these passions, even to the extreme verge of life; and what an image is then presented by men, like the master who translated into French the history of Gyron le

* Eurip. Med. 808.

† Plat. Crito.

‡ Plat. Gorgias.

§ XIX. 22

Courtois, who is represented as an old knight in a very advanced age, coming to King Arthur's court to enter the lists with young knights, "et à scavoir lesquels estoient les plus vaillans ou les jeunes ou les vieulx *," and who is subsequently described in mortal combat, acquitting himself in such a manner, that "he seemed no longer a knight, but thunder and tempest?" In truth, it cannot be denied that there is a great deal of this blind world in all the affectation of chivalrous sentiment, as it appears in the discourse and writings of the moderns. The very use which is made of terms to express it, proves this; for what Thucydides relates of certain miserable times in Greece, takes place here: the usual worth of names is transferred to other and contrary deeds, for irrational boldness is styled manly courage and good companionship; temperance is called effeminacy, and prudence in every thing, idleness in every thing. Or, as Plutarch says of flatterers, dissipation is called liberality, rashness activity, licentiousness the love of society and warmth of natural affection; and the love of mankind entitles men to the charge of being abject and contemptible. What does all this indicate but the approach to those straits which none have passed and lived? Then, too, the crimes and injuries of unholy men are sung and extolled in legends and in poetry, although even the heathens would have shewn the evil of this. For Pindar says, "Whatever thing is done without God is not the worse for being consigned to silence and oblivion:"—

"Ανευθε δὲ θεοῦ, σεσιγα-
μένον γ' οὐ σκαιότερον χρήμ'
Ἕκαστον †.

a principle, which, if observed by writers in our time, would leave their splendid histories as meagre as

* L'Hystoire de Gyron le Courtois, f. 1.

† Olymp. IX.

many of the monkish chronicles, which they deem so insipid. And Euripides says,

Σιγαῖν ἄμεινον ταῖσ' ἄχρά· μηδὲ Μοῦσά μοι
γένοιτ' αἰοιδός, ἥτις ὑμνήσει κακά *.

With idle fables, in which “there lurks a still and dumb-discoursive devil, that tempts most cunningly,” the mind is ever occupied.

———— Dangerous food
For knightly youths, to whom is given
So much of earth, so much of heaven,
And such impetuous blood.

Nor is it to be overlooked, that the importance attached to birth exposes men under this influence to the danger of contracting a thousand stains of pride. “Nobilitas generis sæpe parit ignobilitatem mentis,” said St. Gregory †. It was well for many to resemble Bernardin di Fosco, as described by Dante,

A gentle scion from ignoble stem ‡.

The heart, on that account, was often lighter, the conscience less oppressed. This is shewn by the very bard of chivalry, where he describes how to the mind of Marmion, the wild and innocent song of youth sounded as if disgrace and ill and shameful death were near.

Her wing shall the eagle flap
O'er the false-hearted;
His warm blood the wolf shall lap,
Ere life be parted.
Shame and dishonour sit
By his grave ever;
Blessing shall hallow it
Never, O never!

So sung the simple Fitz Eustace, hoping to amuse his lord, in whom, on the contrary, it awakened all the pangs of horrible remorse.

* Troad. 388.

† Lib. II. Dialog. cap. xxiii.

‡ Purg. XIV.

Not alone nobility of birth, but the being placed in the condition of the rich and powerful, and even that very excellence of disposition which gave rise to chivalry, and which we have seen to be peculiarly favourable to the reception of the Christian doctrine, required more than an ordinary assistance from heaven, to prevent it from becoming the very source of the greatest evil. To understand this position, which at first may seem partly to contradict itself, we need only attend to what Socrates says in the sixth book of the Republic, and every one will perceive that his argument receives additional force from the philosophy of Christians. He speaks thus, "I think that all persons must admit that the qualities which are required to constitute a true lover of wisdom, are imparted but seldom, and to very few men, and see how many and great are the causes of corruption even to these few. For in the first place, that which is most strange of all to hear, each one of the qualities which we have lately praised as requisite for philosophy, destroys the soul and tears it from philosophy, such as courage, temperance, and all the other virtues of which we spoke. In addition to this, all the things that are called good, corrupt the soul and tear it from philosophy, such as beauty and riches, and strength of body, and the having powerful relations in the state, καὶ ξυγγένεια ἐρρώμενη ἐν πόλει, and all such things, for you have the τυχεύς of what I wish to describe. This can be made to appear most clearly. For we know that every seed, whether of plants or of animals, which does not meet with the nourishment proper for it, neither the seasons nor the locality, by how much the more vigorous it is, by so much the more does it want what is proper for it. It is reasonable, then, that the best nature, when it receives an education improper for it, should become worse than an evil nature; so that the souls which are of the best dis-

position by nature, when they receive an evil education, become eminently bad. The greatest crimes spring from such natures, spoiled by a bad education; for a weak nature is capable of nothing great, either in virtue or in vice. If, then, the philosophic nature should obtain the education proper for it, of necessity it will grow up to all virtue; but if it experience a contrary, it will proceed to the very reverse of this *ἐὰν μή τις αὐτῇ βοηθήσας θεῶν τύχη*. If, then, any one should come softly up to a man in this condition, and should say truly, that there is no sense in him, and that he wants sense, and that this is not a thing to be acquired by any one unless by him who is content to make himself a slave for the sake of its acquisition, *μὴ δουλεύσαντι τῇ κτήσει αὐτοῦ*. do you think that he would take pleasure in hearing this, while oppressed with so many evils? Far otherwise indeed. But, on the other hand, if through the excellence of his natural disposition by birth, from being well born, and from his natural affinity to what is delivered, any one should be enabled to perceive what a thing philosophy was, should be bent and drawn to it, what think you would those men do who would know that the use for them and the grounds on which they had enjoyed his company would perish if he yielded to the love of wisdom? Would they not do and say every thing respecting him, that he might not be persuaded, and respecting those persuading him, that they might not be able, conspiring against them in secret, and even calling them before the tribunals? How then can such a man attain to the exercise of philosophy?—We see, then, that the parts of a philosophic nature, when they meet with an evil education, are the very cause why the men who possess them fall from their vocation to philosophy; that the things which are commonly called good, riches and all other attendants, conduce to the same effect,—so great is the facility

of destruction and corruption to the best natures, which are themselves but so few in number as we have shewn,—and that it is from these men that the greatest evils are produced, both private and public, as well as the greatest good whenever they happen to flow in that direction οἱ ἂν ταύτῃ τύχῳσι ῥυέντες* whereas a little nature never does any thing great to any one, either in private or in public*.” This remarkable passage might be illustrated by many memorable events in the intellectual history of the middle ages, by shewing the perfection to which men of noble natures did sometimes attain, the difficulties which they had always to surmount from the very causes above enumerated; the persecution of those who converted them to a life of sanctity, respecting whom the world made as anxious enquiries as the suitors of Penelope did after Minerva, who, in disguise of a guest, had reminded Telemachus of his father†; and the number of those whose evil and extravagant deeds of robust profligacy appear in such dark contrast with the generous and brilliant actions of the just, and whose crimes and follies may be traced to the misdirection of noble qualities, proving the justice of what Dante also says, that

The more of kindly strength is in the soil,
So much doth evil seed and lack of culture
Mar it the more, and make it run to wildness‡.

Indeed, this position is no novelty in the schools. “The blindness of fallen nature,” says a famous book, “judged a life of pleasure and licence to be the best and happiest. Nature adheres to this as most agreeable to it. And this results most powerfully in those who are endowed with an excellent natural reason—for this ascends so high in its own light and in itself, that it thinks itself to be the

* Plato, de Repub. Lib. VI. † Od. I. 705. ‡ Purg. XXX.

eternal and true light, and proposes itself for that ; and being deceived by itself, proceeds to deceive others along with itself*.” The conclusion, therefore, is the same, that the very best qualities, and the very choicest intellectual and moral treasures are changed into evils and obstacles to virtue, by the pride and self-sufficiency which they generate ; and that in this respect the only possible safety, reserved for the chivalrous nature, was in its complete and unreserved submission to the influence of that Catholic doctrine, which taught and enabled men to embrace practically poverty of spirit—which taught the monarch on his throne to say, with the son of a poor labourer, “ Let others, like the Jews, seek honour one from another : I will desire that which is from God alone. All human glory, all temporal honour, all mundane altitude, compared with thy eternal glory, is vanity and folly. O veritas mea et misericordia mea, Deus meus, Trinitas beata ! tibi soli laus, honor, virtus, et gloria, per infinita seculorum secula †.”

And now, in passing from this retrospect of the ways and thoughts of pride, may we feel that joy which Dante experienced, when he had traversed the first division of the suffering Church, where this sin was expiated and purged away :—

————— We climb the holy stairs :
 And lighter to myself by far I seem'd
 Than on the plain before ; whence thus I spake :
 “ Say, master, of what heavy thing have I
 Been lighten'd ; that scarce aught the sense of toil
 Affects me journeying ? ” He in few replied :
 “ When sin's broad characters, that yet remain
 Upon thy temples, though well nigh effaced,
 Shall be, as one is, all clean razed out :

* Theologia Germanica, Cap. xviii.

† De Imit. Christ. III. 40.

Then shall thy feet, by heartiness of will,
 Be so o'ercome, they not alone shall feel
 No sense of labour, but delight much more
 Shall wait them, urged along their upward way*."

CHAPTER VI.

THE line of this argument presents a changing scene, and brings before us men of very different classes in one succeeding order. From knights who were exposed to the danger of seeking glory in their deeds, I pass to the consideration of the learned and the holy writers, whose indifference to fame, though their's were souls wanting nothing of great praise, furnishes a subject of itself instructive and suitable to the present enquiry. Here are presented two objects most characteristic of Christian ages—the motives, and object, and expectations of men in writing books, and the style and general tone of their composition. The great writers of heathen antiquity have generally taken care to acquaint us at once with their motives in writing, and the expectations which they founded upon their labours. With one,

————— *Eximiæ laudis succensus amore,*

it is to transmit his own achievements to posterity; with another, to beguile a period of exile, or to divert his mind from public calamities; with another, to amuse his leisure, and prepare glory for his own name: thinking with Pindar, "that he is happy whom fame celebrates"—

————— *ὁ δ' ὀλβιος, δν
 Φᾶμαι κατέχοντ' ἀγαθαί †.*

* Purg. XII.

† Olmp. VII.

“ I am persuaded,” says Dionysius, “ that those who would wish to leave monuments of their genius to posterity, ought in the first place to choose a splendid and illustrious theme, which can afford much utility to those who study it: for they who undertake to write upon obscure, ignoble matters, or such as are evil, and of no importance, whether from a desire to shew their knowledge and to make a name for themselves, or merely from a wish to display their skill in writing, are never the objects of emulation to posterity, in consequence of this knowledge, nor are they praised on account of their eloquence *.” Cardan seems to express the sense of nearly all Pagan writers on this point, where he says, “ In universum nil prosunt literæ ni tympanum pulset aliquis. Infelix autem conditio tua est quum ipse cogeris pulsare †.” They nearly all indicate the sentiment expressed by Jason in the tragedy—“ May I never possess treasures without the applause of men.”

μήτ' Ὀρφέως κάλλιον ὑμνῆσαι μέλος,
εἰ μὴ ᾧ πίσσημος ἢ τύχη γένοιτό μοι ‡.

A result which they deemed adequate compensation for any previous injury; so that Jason reminds Medea of the advantage he has already conferred upon her in causing her to reside in Greece, where every one praises her talents and wisdom; whereas, if she had lived ἐπ' ἐσχάτοις γῆς, there would have been no talk of her §. In the ages of faith, the motives and views of men who were authors of books, were totally opposed to these: and therefore, without proceeding to enquire farther, it would be but reasonable to expect, à priori, that their works themselves would have a new and distinctive character.

* Antiquit. Rom. Lib. I.

† Eurip. Med. 542.

‡ Prudentia Civilis, Cap. xc.

§ Ibid. 540.

There were also external and accidental circumstances, which contributed to secure this result. Many of the chronicles, and other books of the middle ages, were written by monks for the use of their brethren in the cloister. "The greatest number of these writers," says a learned historian of the Crusades, "believed that their books were to live and die like themselves, in solitude. Hence the simplicity of their narrative, and sometimes its indiscretion. What would have been their surprise if it had been announced to them, that on a future day their volumes were to be judged before the tribunal of the proud world, or of the age, and that the invention of printing would multiply copies of their manuscripts! As they never thought that the public would behold them, their style was frank and natural. Piety prescribed to the writers of the cloister to fly from all falsehood; and that fact should be a warrant to us at least of their good faith. Some condemn themselves to the punishment of hell if they should ever write in the spirit of prejudice or of hatred; others in their preface implore the charity of their readers, and, addressing themselves to the Divine clemency, hope that, if they should commit any errors, God will pardon them when they appear at his dread tribunal. In relating events, they are accustomed to date from the festivals of the Church, for religion was always in their thoughts. After the interests of the Church they attend to those of their respective monasteries. In speaking of heroes or princes, they represent them rather according to their physical than their moral qualities, unlike those 'who look not at the deed alone, but spy into the thoughts with subtle skill.' They relate only facts, and make no speculation as to causes or effects; only they sometimes conclude the account of a mournful event with a pious reflection—as when they have related the fall of an empire or the death of a great

king, they exclaim that the glory of the world vanishes like a vapour, that it passes like the water of a torrent, or decays like the flowers of the spring. A wet season, an inundation, a drought, a storm, would then occupy the attention of history, for the public prosperity depended upon the harvest; and they even descended to the least particulars, as when the monk of St. Denis says, that the lightning fell upon the gilt cock on the belfry of the abbey. To observe their attention in recording eclipses, comets, and all remarkable phenomena of the atmosphere, one would suppose that they were writing the history of the seasons. Nothing embarrassed them in the natural or political order; for whatever seemed unaccountable and horrible to reason, was ascribed by them to the secret designs of God *."

In describing the evils of their age, their intense sense of justice, writing as if before the Divine altars, may have led them to adopt language, from which we can at present argue but little; for though they judged no man personally, they might freely condemn a general misery: and it was kindred spirits to theirs which Dante had in view when he exclaimed,

————— O clear conscience and upright !
How doth a little failing wound thee sore †.

The spirit with which these men wrote may be inferred from the circumstance of their having so often succeeded in concealing their names from posterity. They were content to be forgotten or unknown if they could but save their readers, unlike so many writers of later times, who are ever anxious to secure for themselves a name; and if they can but further this object, scruple not to excite the passions, and to

* Michau sur le Caractère et l'Esprit des Chroniques du Moyen Age.

† Purg. Cant. III.

expose their readers to eternal ruin ! The author of the *Imitation of Christ* is unknown. Some ascribe it to Thomas à Kempis, others to the Abbot Gersen ; and this diversity of opinion has been the source of long, and, as the Abbé de la Mennais says, useless controversies ; “ but no object,” he observes, “ is too frivolous for human curiosity. Immense researches have been made to discover the name of a poor solitary of the thirteenth century. What is the result of so many labours ? the solitary has continued unknown ; and the happy obscurity in which his life glided has protected his humility against our vain science.” The historian of the Abbey of Jumièges is obliged to confess his inability to do justice to the admirable men who pursued learning and the arts within that cloister, “ because,” he says, “ their modesty and humility rendered them unambitious of being known to posterity*.” “ The monks,” says the *Chronicle of Richarius*, “ greatly cherished St. Filibert, as being the most fervent disciple of the late St. Richarius. At that time faithful men, holy and good, took no great care to commit to writing the things which were done, because they only attended to this end, how they might deserve to be inscribed in the book of life ; therefore we should not have known even the names of the abbots who succeeded, had not the venerable Abbot Angelran made a catalogue of them, thinking that such men ought to be remembered †.” And in the same manner Desguerrois, in his history of the Diocese of Troyes, observes of the ancients, that “ they were more desirous of being saints than learned historians, and that there is therefore much obscurity in their accounts of the early saints of Gaul.” A great theologian laments that Pagan authors, such as Diogenes Laertius, and

* Deshayes, *Hist. de l'Abbaye de Jumièges*, 154.

† *Chronic. Centulensis sive Richarii*, Lib. I. cap. xxviii.

Suetonius should have given more exact histories of the philosophers and Cæsars than many Catholic writers have left of martyrs, virgins, and confessors*.

The cloister had its poets too, but they sought not to follow that Theban eagle, "to walk," as Pindar says, "high in the paths of life †." It was enough if they could compose some hymn or melody for the glory of God and the utility of the Church. The author of the sublime hymn *Salve Regina* is said to have been Herman, a Benedictine monk in the year 1059, who was altogether devoid of polished literature ‡. The names of those who composed some others are unknown. "Whatever you do," says the father of the Scholastic Theology, "do all for future benefit, in expectation of the eternal recompense: a future, not a present recompense is promised to the saints; in heaven, not on earth, reward is promised to the just. What is to be given elsewhere must not then be expected here. Be dead to the world, and let the world be dead to you. As if dead, look upon the glory of the world; as if buried, be not careful for the world; as if dead, cease from earthly cares. Despise, living, what you cannot possess after death. Study nothing on account of praise, nothing on account of temporal opinion, nothing for the sake of fame, but all things on account of eternal life, which may he grant you who liveth in heaven blessed for ever and ever §."

What a contrast is here to the spirit of men who do nothing from these supernatural motives, whose writings, alms, and even prayers, are all for the sake of the world; and of whose devotional literature it may be said with truth, that "gainful merchandize is made of Christ throughout the live long day!"

* Melchior Canus, Lib. II. de locis Theolog.

† Olymp. I.

‡ Card. Bona de Divina Psalmodia, 406.

§ S. Anselmi Lib. Exhortationum.

The muse of Pindar would perhaps have disdained the sanctuary of the Christian soul, "Who of those that are destined to die would wish to cover in vain an inglorious old age without a name, sitting in darkness *ἀπάντων καλῶν ἄμμορος* *." This is a darkness in which the holy writers of past ages were willing to sit expecting the manifestation of the Son of God. "Unknown to the world," says Louis de Blois, "they conceal themselves in retreat. Hardly do men without perceive their interior application to the things of heaven, and their conversation so Christian, so heavenly, which they maintain with God ; unless, indeed, they be men who have received from heaven the same grace, for they avoid letting appear without any thing extraordinary or singular. In the commerce of life they are gentle, beneficent, and full of sweet humanity ; they study to become the most amiable of men, but in such a manner as to preserve themselves pure from all sin ; they are full of indulgence for all men. Such are the obscure children of God, who never utter any words but those of humility, and who comport themselves always in all things as if they were worthless, being often despised even by those who appear externally to have some sanctity †."

Do not these inhabitants of the cloister seem like those of a higher world, to which the poet alludes :

I might relate of thousands, and their names
Eternize here on earth ; but those elect
Angels, contented with their love in heav'n,
Seek not the praise of men.————

Were these writers in the ages of faith deceived in their estimate of the value of human fame? Ah! there are some who seem to think so, though even

* Olymp. I.

† Louis de Blois, Institution Spirituelle, chap. xii. §. 4.

there were heathen sages who abstractedly made the same.

“Ornat hæc magnitudo animi,” says Pliny, “quæ nihil ad ostentationem, omnia ad conscientiam refert *.” “Multi famam,” he says again, “conscientiam pauci verentur †.” If fame were not vanity in itself, its capricious and unjust dispensation would prove it worthless. Pliny thought that the verses of Martial would not pass to posterity; “and yet,” says the philosopher with an air of deep reflection, “he wrote as if they were to endure to future ages ‡.” They did endure, and will probably last with the world, while no one knows who were the authors of the two most sublime books that exist, the Poems of Homer and the Book of Job. How many holy wise men are forgotten! how many fools and villains immortalized! Ælian has immortalized the names of several great eaters §. How many base calumniators of truth and goodness have we seen rise up whose volumes will descend to the latest posterity with the applause of a blind world, though Justice, if she had a voice on earth, would cry,

“Cancell'd from heav'n and sacred memory,
Nameless in dark oblivion let them dwell!”

If we turn now to consider the style of their compositions, we shall find that it corresponds with the motives which induced them to write: their standard seems to be expressed by Raban Maur, where he says, “Magis eligo sanctam rusticitatem, quam eloquentiam peccatricem ||.” St. Gregory of Tours apologizes for having undertaken to write upon the glory of the confessors, acknowledging that he has no genius or eloquence to qualify him for such a task, and adding, of himself, “whom no worldly

* Epist. Lib. I. 22.

† Lib. III. 20.

‡ Epist. Lib. III. 21.

§ Var. Hist.

|| De Institutione Clericorum, Lib. III. 27.

boasting hath lifted up to write, but whom shame admonished to be silent, the love and fear of Christ hath impelled to relate these things*.” Nothing can be greater than his reluctance to presume to write concerning the miracles of St. Martin: he wishes that Severus or Paulinus were alive to continue their histories; but he is impelled to do it by a vision, and by reflecting that the Saviour of the world chose poor illiterate men for his apostles, and therefore he undertakes the task without being dissuaded by the conviction of his own rusticity†. It does not enter into their idea of writing to begin as if constructing a palace, by raising a vestibule of golden columns, and thus making the frontispiece beautiful; to their humble books nothing can be more simple than the entrance. “I have made a little treatise respecting the mode of preparing for a happy death, and I have said something respecting our heavenly country, and also concerning the divinity and the rational creature.” It is in this style that Louis de Blois introduces one of his books‡. The prologue to the four books of Sentences, by the celebrated Peter Lombard, Archbishop of Paris, who was known by the title of the Master of the Sentences, begins with these words, “Desiring, with the poor widow, to cast something out of our poverty into the treasury of the Lord, we have presumed beyond our strength, moved by the zeal of the House of God, opposing our faith to the errors of carnal and animal men.” Dante alludes to this in describing him in the quire of Paradise:

Peter, he that with the widow gave
To Holy Church his treasure §.

* De Gloria Confessorum Præfat.

† Epist. Ante, Lib. Miracul. D. Martini.

‡ Ludovic Blosius Enchiridion Parvulorum Præfat.
Paradise, X.

With the same simplicity they allude to the works of their contemporaries. Thus the blessed John of the Cross, Director of St. Theresa, says in one of his books, "I leave this matter to some one else more worthy: especially since our blessed Mother, Theresa of Jesus, has written admirably on this subject; and I hope from the Divine goodness that her works will be printed and given to the public before long:" they saw the Divine goodness and they trusted to it in every thing. Petrus Cellensis, Abbot of St. Remy, says, in a letter to a monk of St. Bertine, "You desire to have our letters, which, like useless feathers, are borne in every direction by the four winds of heaven, though you sit at the rich tables of the Augustines and Gregories and Jeromes, the Ambroses and Bedes and Hilaries and Origenes, whose crumbs I am not worthy to pick up. If you are pleased with new things behold the works of Master Hugues and St. Bernard, of Master Gilbert and Master Peter, in which neither roses nor lilies are wanting; but our writings have no depth or fertility*." The moderns, who so love moral abstraction in their misguided desire to be spiritual that they would have us to believe them humble, while using the proudest words, will object to these passages, and accuse them of affectation; but yet a natural and unvitiated taste will agree with Pliny where he says, "*Nescio quo pacto magis in studiis homines timor quam fiducia decet †.*" A distinguished professor in the Academy of Paris has lately written a book, and styled himself on the title page "*Philosopher.*" Epictetus would have taught him better, *Μηδ' αὖ σεαυτὸν εἶπης φιλόσοφον ‡.* To their humility of style was added that certain tone of deep conviction

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* Epist. Lib. VII. 19.

† Epist. Lib. V. 17.

‡ Manuale, cap. xlii.

and stability, amounting even to playfulness, which necessarily belongs to those who are established

————— In that holy faith
Which vanquishes all error.

Thus Petrus Cellensis, the Abbot of St. Remy, writes as follows: "Brother Nicholas, in jesting you have said the truth, when, in allusion to my name, Peter, you have called me a stone, and I grant you it suits me, if you understand constancy and not hardness, for I am by nature and profession, in age and in will, as well as in name, petrine, rocky, rooted and founded in the mountains of the holy authorities, and in the midst of the rocks, where mother Church builds her nest in the clefts and caverns*." Hence there is often more solid instruction in the mere titles of their works than we could gain from all the frothy contents of modern volumes, which are nothing to the touch but clouds and vapour. Such was that adopted by Rodolphe le Maître in 1635, expressing so much in few words, "Treatise on Catholic Constancy, against the floating errors of this time†." In later times an author would be anxious to add a long list of honourable distinctions to his name; whereas the most learned and illustrious writers of the middle age are contented to sign themselves, like St. Anselm, a monk and a sinner; the title by which St. Peter Damian was distinguished while he dwelt beside the Adriatic, in the house of our blessed Lady, as he reminds Dante on appearing to him in Paradise. It is remarked by Father Lewis of Grenada, that he "into whose keeping, from the cross, the mighty charge was given," might have called himself an Apostle, a Prophet, an Evangelist, and the son

* Epist. Lib. VI. 23.

† Gouget, Biblioth. Française. Tom. xv. 367.

by adoption of the Virgin Mother ; but he passes in silence over all these magnificent titles, and calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved. Thus, in ages of faith, to be his humble disciple was deemed more glorious than to be celebrated as an historian or orator, a poet, a general, or a king.

On the other hand, the chronicles and lives written in the middle ages are simply written, and in an unguarded, artless style which requires a Catholic interpreter. Thus sentences often follow sentences, apparently with but little, or even with a false connection ; but here we must not, like the moderns, immediately commence a charge of error, of superstition, or of inhumanity. The author of an amusing history of Grenada, would lead his reader to form an uncharitable opinion of the illustrious Mariana, from his concluding the account of a loss sustained by the Christian army with the words, “ but as these latter were chiefly people of low rank, baggage carriers, and such like, the loss was not of great importance.” Similar to expressions in Froissart, which have involved him equally in the like charge. But in these instances do not the words merely express the fact ? Is not the loss to an army of some great captain greater than that of a private soldier ? Mariana is not preaching a sermon, but writing a history ; and indeed I do not believe that even this writer, who accuses him, and who is generally so estimable, would maintain that the great historian of Spain required to be taught humanity by the modern philanthropists. In all similar instances, to the page of the monkish chronicles, a closer attention would enable us to discover the writer’s goodness and purity of intentions, though a hasty glance at the passage might furnish ground to a modern reader for accusation against him. What Dante sings of higher matters is applicable here :

——— Things oft appear
That minister false matter to our doubts
When their true causes are removed from sight*.

But the fact is that these writers never contemplated the possibility of men so mistaking their meaning, or that these inaccuracies of style would become of consequence. "He founded a monastery, for he was most pious," says a chronicle. So then, will the Robertsons and their followers observe, this was the grand proof of piety! Attend a little, you hasty judge. "For he was most pious, a lover of the poor, and of all that appertained to God." Here the meaning is clear; but frequently the sentence would not have been completed, and thus a ground would have been left open to these suspicious, uncharitable, and overknowing readers to condemn the holy men of these simple ages. Where they do err it is not the fault of their intention, their language clearly shows this. Thus the monk Richerius, in his *Chronicle of Sens*, says, "Because I have found little or nothing recorded of the acts of the successors of the blessed Gundelbert, excepting only their names, I have not presumed to add any thing of my own, lest I should be accounted a new author of rumours †." And again he says of the Abbot Magneramnus, "quia nihil plus invenio, nihil scribere possum ‡." Facts that seem contrary to this view should be interpreted, bearing in mind that these books were written for a confined and almost domestic circle of readers, to whom the object and intentions of the writer might be known or transmitted. That love of sacred antiquity which inspired Mabillon went hand in hand, as he declares, with the love of truth §. Not that in this respect he differed from those who went before him, but that as soon as men could foresee the danger, we

* Purg. XXII.

† Id. Lib. IV. 20.

‡ Chronic. Senoniensis, Lib. III.

§ Præfat. in 1 Sæcul. Benedictinum.

find that they took care to provide against it. For others who never contemplated such a result, as Mabillon says of Trithemius and Arnoldus Wion, who first attempted to put in order the history of the great and holy men who followed the rule of St. Benedict, they are to be excused if amidst such difficulties and obscurity they erred sometimes. Yet, continues the great Mabillon, “Imprudent and precipitous admirers,” (like those who claim saints that do not belong to their order,) “may be as opposed to truth as unjust calumniators. Unde mihi semper maximæ curæ fuit hunc scopulum vitare, et quamvis eruditione et scientia inferior, nulli tamen sinceritate verique studio cedere umquam sustinebo *.”

But there remains to be considered a class of writers who form a distinctive feature of the middle ages, whose lives and labours were especially directed by the view of that beatitude which is promised to the poor in spirit. Louis de Blois, of the ancient house of Blois and of Châtillon, was from childhood a model of piety and virtue ; educated at the Court of Prince Charles, afterwards Charles V., the world was always a strange country for him ; he had a distaste for pleasure, riches, and grandeur. At the age of fourteen years he renounced the world, and entered into a monastery of Benedictines. At the age of twenty-four he was named to preside over the Abbey of Liesse, which he continued to edify till his death, which happened in 1566, for no persuasions had prevailed upon him to accept the archiepiscopal see of Cambray. The admirable translator of his spiritual guide, in the Preface which he has prefixed, speaks in general of the ascetical writers of the middle age, and says, “It is allowable to suppose that these men, or rather these angels on the earth, enlightened within by eternal splendour, refreshed

* Præfat. in 1 Sæcul. Benedictinum.

and vivified by that dew of light, of which the Prophet speaks *, have let fall some of its drops in their writings, and that it is less their words which we hear than the very words of God himself. Their thoughts, their language, all bespeak a celestial origin. It is not thus that men speak. Man has not along with so much grandeur, such simplicity ; nor with so much love, such peaceful calm. This Divine mixture of innocence and sublimity, of ardour and quiet, is a distinctive character of these ascetical authors ; they alone know how to touch and to move the soul profoundly, without causing it to lose its peace. The eloquence of man, all passionate, because addressed to the passions, inflames, exalts, and overwhelms ; its strength is in its violence ; it is a torrent which, in its course, breaks and carries away hearts ; but hear a poor monk speaking of the Saviour Jesus,—his countenance is calm and serene—his words are simple and sweet ; and yet hardly has he spoken two words when you feel yourself affected, and you let fall some delicious tears. With means so weak in appearance, how are such wonderful effects produced ? To explain this spiritual miracle, it would be necessary to unveil the very foundations of the pious and fervent soul, to enter into the secret of grace, and shew by what concealed ways, by what mysterious channels, it communicates itself, and passes from one heart into another, things almost ineffable, or which but very few men are enabled to know and to reveal ; for us, who are but infants in Jesus Christ, we shall confine ourselves to acknowledging here the finger of God, and to adoring in silence his incomprehensible power and his ravishing goodness.”

The Greeks had a saying that every man lived as he spoke ; and Quinctilian tells us that it used to be

* Isai. xxvi. 19.

said of Cæsar, that he always spoke with the same mind as that with which he conducted war*. The same may be said of these ascetical writers of the middle ages; they wrote as they spent their innocent lives, in the house of God. That ravishing calm, that inexpressible peace, which we experience, in reading their writings with a docile faith, and a humble love, place us, as it were, within the very sanctuary of the secluded spot, amidst woods and mountains where monasteries stood. It is as if the noise of the world had died away around us. What are the pleasures of the world compared with these unutterable joys? These books, like the *Cantica Canticorum* of Solomon, "Seraphic all in fervency," seem to begin with a kiss of peace; they could not have been written by men who studied only the virtue which is known by means of lofty song†. It must have been by men who drew all their science from benign goodness, like St. Dominick, who, when he was asked where he found all the admirable things which he preached to the people, replied, "in the little book of charity‡." Well is discerned,

How in their intellect already shines
The light eternal, which to view alone
Ne'er fails to kindle love§.

St. Bernard comments thus upon the words of the Evangelist: "He was a burning and a shining light," &c. and adds, "It is not said shining and burning; because the light of John was from his fervour, not his fervour from his light; for there are some who shine not because they burn, but rather they burn in order that they may shine; these men burn not with the spirit of charity, but with the ardour of vanity||." Such men have need of the caution of Antony, of

* *Instit. Lib. X. l.*

† *Pind. Pyth. III.*

‡ *Ludovic. Grenad. in Festo B. Dominici, Concio III.*

§ *Dante, Parad. V.*

|| *In S. Joan. Bapt. Nativ. Serm.*

whom Cicero says, "that he never wrote his discourses, that in the event of his own words being opposed to him, he might have it in his power to deny them *." It was the predominance of such characters among those of his sect, which made Fuller exclaim, "How easy is pen-and-paper piety for one to write religiously!" He would have deemed it writing religiously, to compose books like those we see entitled, "Piety without asceticism," that must be, in other words, how to love both God and the world, and how to avoid the cross, taking up a kind of natural and amiable temper, for which the highest expressions may be found in Plutarch or Seneca. All this, indeed, is easy; but to write like the holy authors of the ages of faith, there must be the solemn and irrevocable will to live like them, in poverty of spirit.

It is this renouncement of intellectual possessions which gives the distinctive character to their writings. Following him, "qui semetipsum exinanivit," through humility, they might have expressed the fervour of their desire to imitate him, in the line of the poet,

εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ φροῦδός εἰμι πᾶς ἐγώ *.

"Take from me, O Lord," cries St. Anselm, "if it be thy will, my substance; take from me the members of my body, my hands, my feet, my eyes, only leave me a heart with which I may be able to love thee!" Their highest rapture is derived from beholding some saintly man, and it is only to make an instant offering of it to God, without the least thought of its being made serviceable to answer any proud purpose of their own hearts; unlike that poet, who sang his vision of the future world, and whose unerring style seems for once to fail him, when he says—

* Pro Cluentio, 140.

† Eurip. Med. 720.

There, on the green enamel of the plain,
 Were shewn me, the great spirits, by whose sight
 I am exalted in my own esteem.

They knew their wisdom not to be their own, and whatever store they had, freely they ascribed it to the grace of him who had heard their prayer. What a contrast was here to the judgment of all mortal men! if the ancient philosopher has truly described it; for he asks, "Did ever any one thank the gods for being a good man? but was it not only for being rich, for being honoured, for being preserved; for this is the judgment of all mortal men, that fortune is to be sought for from God, but wisdom to be obtained from oneself*."

St. Anselm, in his sublime meditations, prays to God that he may be delivered from that curiosity which desires to know every thing†. To such an extent did these men carry their detachment and humility, taught by the blessed spirits, who, though they see their Maker, yet know not the scope or essence of his mysteries, and "esteem such scantiness of knowledge their delight; for all their good is in that primal good concentrate, and God's will and theirs are one." In a lower respect, their humility was but the natural consequence of their choice, as reason herself can in some sort discern. Thus the ancient sage said, "If you wish to advance, be content to suffer, that you should appear to others senseless and stupid as to external things. Do not wish to seem to know any thing. You must either renounce your resolution or neglect external things‡." And Seneca complained, that as in every thing else, so also in the study of letters, the men of his age were intemperate§; by which he meant that they were not endowed

* Cicero de Nat. Deorum, Lib. III.

† Medit. cap. i. § 2.

‡ Epicteti Manuale, cap. xii.

§ Epist. 106.

with real wisdom. “J’ay prens plaisir,” says Montaigne, “de veoir en quelque lieu, des hommes par devotion, faire voeu d’ignorance, comme de chasteté, de pauvreté, de penitence ; c’est aussi chastier nos appetits desordonnez, d’esmourer cette cupidité qui nous espoinçonne à l’estude des livres, et priver l’ame de cette complaisance voluptueuse qui nous chatouille par l’opinion de science ; et est richement accomplir le voeu de pauvreté d’y joindre encore celle de l’esprit *.” This must sound very strange to the modern lover of learning, who seeks to fly as a conqueror upon the tongues of men,

“Victorque virum volitare per ora †”

However, such a vow required great simplicity of intention ; for with these ancient writers it was not learning, but the pride and spiritual riches consequent upon it, which offended them. Thus Louis of Blois, in giving rules for the direction of studies, says, “Seek not superfluous science and eloquent words, for the kingdom of God consists not in eloquence of language, but in holiness of life. Yet this elegance need not be disdained when it is found, for it is also a gift of God. Receive it then with thanksgiving, and all will be useful to salvation. It is not necessary that you should be able to remember the words, but that you should appropriate to yourself the substance of the doctrine ‡.” Nay, by choosing ignorance, they shew that men may be rich in spirit, so as to be examples of spiritual riches or spiritual pride, and of the inordinate false liberty consequent upon it. “With this,” they say, “a man supposes that he has no need of learning from books or other instructors ; not only he counts them for nothing, but he even derides all rites, institutions, laws, precepts, and sacraments of holy Church, as

* Essais, Lib. III. 12.

† Georgic. III. 8.

‡ Guide Spirituel, chap. iii.

also all men who use them and attribute aught to them; he concludes that he knows more than all other men, and therefore he always loves to talk and dictate to others, and he will have his sayings alone esteemed, and all other men's words to be regarded as false, or rather to be scorned as ridiculous and absurd *."

St. Jerome had expressly argued against the disparagers of learning, and had said, "*venerationi mihi semper fuit, non verbosa rusticitas, sed sancta simplicitas* †." And, in fact, there are many passages in the ascetical and other writings of the middle age, than which as nothing can be wiser, so also it will be found that nothing can be more eloquent.

Guizot, who, in such a question, is an authority not to be suspected, says of the writers of the middle ages, who recorded the deeds and thoughts of holy men, "If we consider them in a purely literary point of view, we shall find their merit no less brilliant, and no less varied. Nature and simplicity are not wanting in them; they are devoid of affectation, and free from pedantry ‡." A slight acquaintance with them will, with most minds, generate a distaste for those innumerable books of later times, which bear undoubted signs of having been written by men who were full of themselves, and who, in composing them, were really no otherwise occupied than in worshipping their own miserable image. "*Et quia magis eligunt magni esse quam humiles, ideo evanescent in cogitationibus suis.*" The very language, all neglected and unpretending as it may be, will please more than that apparelled eloquence, "or rather disguised in a courtesan-like painted affectation, made up of so far-fetched words, that they seem strangers

* *Theologia Germanica*, cap. xxiii.

† *Epist.* xxxiii.

‡ *Cours d'Hist. Mod.* Tom. II. 180.

and even monsters in the tongue," with which the writings of so many of the moderns are recommended to the half-learned and superficial public, which is to be amused with sounds and flattered into a conviction of its own wisdom.

Our object at least seems now fulfilled, in having shewn what were the effects of poverty of spirit upon the writings of men in ages of faith.

CHAPTER VII.

THE first beatitude answers also to the mind and state of youth, and this shall be the subject of our next meditation. The justice of this proposition may be inferred from the assurance given by Truth itself, that no one shall in any wise be permitted to enter into the celestial city, unless he approach in this character of youth: *sicut puer* *, or *velut parvulus* †: for there can be no doubt that this testimony in favour of the young had in view the absence of all proud adherence to private judgment, and of all worldly ambition, a readiness to submit to authority, simplicity, and poverty of spirit, which we must therefore admit to be, through a singular grace, generally the inherent and distinctive qualities of the young. Our object here must be to review the character of youth, in reference to these qualities, as exhibited in the history and institutions of the ages of faith. It must be admitted, that many of the wise ancients have left in their writings admirable instructions respecting the education of the young,

* Luc. xviii. 17

† Marc. x. 15.

and the end to which it should be directed. It is curious to remark, that there is hardly any one point on which the opinions of the moderns differ more from those of heathen antiquity, than on this head of the mode and object of education. The ancients say that "the essential things in the education of the young, are to teach them to worship the gods, to revere their parents, to honour their elders, to obey the laws, to submit to rulers, to love their friends, to be temperate in refraining from pleasure * ;" objects, not one of which the moderns would think proper for entering into a philosophic plan of education, since it is notorious that with them the direction of the energies and passions is always excluded from it. Aristotle, however, says of this direction, "it is not a little matter whether it be in this manner or in that from youth, but it is a very great matter, or rather it is every thing, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ πᾶν †." The moderns, again, have determined, practically at least, that the whole of education consists in acquiring knowledge, and that the only subject for deliberation is respecting the mode best calculated to further that end in the shortest time, and with the least possible expenditure. With them, the person who can speak or argue on the greatest number of subjects, with the air of knowing all about each of them, is the best educated. Hence, within the very hallowed walls of the ancient theological schools, have arisen philosophical colleges and universities, which, after a time, most parents have been induced to regard with the same eyes as those with which Strepsiades, in the old play, looked upon the school to which he had foolishly sent his son, supposing it to be an admirable academy to teach men all that ought to be known, but which he soon regarded very differently,

* Plutarch de Educat. Puer. cap. xix.

† Ethic. Nicom. II. 1.

when his son came home to him, and seized a trifling occasion to fly in a passion, and on his remonstrance, proceeded to inflict stripes upon him, his own father ; proving, at the same time, that children ought to be allowed to beat their fathers. Then the poet laughs at the poor old man, who is now so changed in opinions, that he is for setting fire to the school-house * ! This opinion of the ancients, which identified education with the direction which was given to the passions, will explain the sentence of Socrates, when he says that “ the soul departs to Hades, taking nothing along with it but its education and nourishment † .”

If we proceed to enquire into their ideas respecting this direction, we shall find that here also they differ totally from the opinions of the moderns. Plato constantly speaks of it as the great object of education to make the young mild and gentle, to tame that savage spirit which he seems sometimes to suppose is natural to them ; whereas the moderns generally applaud that system of public education which nourishes what they call a manly spirit, by which a boy is made bold and insolent, and constantly ready to fight, or to contend with any one that offers the smallest opposition to his will, which makes him resemble the son of Strepsiades returning from the school of the Sophists, of whom his father says with joy, “ In the first place, I mark the expression of your countenance ; your face indicates at once that you are prepared to deny and to contradict. Yours is the Attic look, Ἀττικὸν βλέπον † .” Hence many of their young men are like those who were disciples of the Sophists, of whom Socrates says, that they were fair and of good natural dispositions, what the moderns would term of polished manners, but inso-

* Aristoph. Nubes.

† Plato Phædo, 107.

‡ Aristoph. Nubes, 1171.

lent through youth, *μάλα καλός τε κάγαθός τήν φύσιν ὅσον μὲν, ὑβριστῆς δὲ διὰ τὸ νέος εἶναι* *. To this system Socrates seems to allude, when he says, "What should we say of a breaker-in of horses, asses, or oxen, if, receiving them not addicted to biting, or kicking, or butting with their horns, he should return them, doing all these things through ferocity? Is it not the sign of an evil instructor, whether of a man, or whatever may be the animal under his care, if he should render what was mild and gentle more ferocious than when he received it †?"

Indeed, Plato has continually in view the necessity of softening and making mild the nature of men, by directing the education of youth to that end. Thus it is shewn in his writings, that music should be instilled into the young with rhythm and harmony, *ἵνα ἡμερώτεροί τε ᾤσι, καὶ εὐρυθμότεροι καὶ εὐαρμοστώτεροι ἡγνόμενοι χρήσιμοι ᾤσιν εἰς τὸ λέγειν τε καὶ πράττειν* ‡. He says, "that man, when he has received a right education, is the most gentle of all creatures, *ἡμερώτατον ζῶον*, but when not sufficiently, or not well educated, he becomes the most savage that the earth produces, *ἀγριώτατον ὅποσα φύει γῆ* §." Pindar seems to have had the same opinion of education, in praising that of Demophilus:

*κεῖνος γὰρ ἐν παισὶ νέος,
ἐν δὲ βουλαῖς πρέσβυς
ἔμαθε δ' ὑβρίζοντα μισεῖν,
οὐκ ἐρίζων ἀντία τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς* ||.

Such, indeed, was the importance of a similar direction even in heroic times, that Homer, when he represents Ulysses finding himself in a strange country—a circumstance which must then have been of

* Plato, Euthydemus.

† Plato, Gorgias.

‡ Protagoras.

§ De Legibus, Lib. VI.

|| Pyth. Od. IV. vide etiam Isocrat. Panegy.

frequent occurrence to many men—makes him express anxiety on no other point but that of ascertaining whether the natives had been trained to gentleness and piety, or were disposed to haughty insolence.

ὦ μοι ἐγὼ, τέων αὖτε βροτῶν ἐς γαῖαν ἰκάνω;
ἦ ῥ' οἷγ' ὑβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι, οὐδὲ δίκαιοι,
ἠὲ φιλόξεينوι, καὶ σφιν νόος ἐστὶ θεουδής * ;

This was the Homeric criterion of civilization ; and though it does not of necessity comprise a great extension of what is termed knowledge, perhaps it would not suffer much in comparison with the theory of some of the moderns on the same subject ; the influence of whose doctrines would often lead a stranger to fear that he was in the neighbourhood of the Cyclops, ἀνδρῶν ὑπερηνορέόντων.

It may be observed also, that the rules given to youth by Plutarch, for conversation, in his Treatise on the manner in which men should hear, approach nearer to the mildness and delicacy of Christian charity, than perhaps any other passage in the heathen writers. He inculcates, what approaches to its modesty, its patience, in attending to others, and in waiting for the voluntary self-corrections of those with whom they converse, and its slowness to contradict and give offence. But all this falls very short, and, indeed, can yield not the slightest idea of the effects of education upon the young in the ages of faith, when the Catholic religion formed its basis, and directed the whole system in all its objects, manners, and details ; and to make the truth of this observation apparent, I shall proceed to adduce instances from the histories of the period, and to suggest the conclusions which necessarily must be drawn from other passages of ancient writings which relate to this subject ; reserving, however, for a future

* Od. VI. 119.

place, what belongs immediately to the discipline of the great institutions of the middle age, schools, and colleges, since it is only with the disposition and character of youth as resulting from it, that we are at present concerned.

In the delightful and instructive memorials which have reached us of the lives of men in ages of faith, there is no part more refreshing, and, as contrasted with the present scenes around us, more curious, than that in which is described the manners of the young, the flight of innocent wings, the elevation of the youthful heart to God. This will best be understood by giving examples, the force of which will consist in taking them collectively.

St. Boniface, writing the life and martyrdom of St. Livinus, describes his education and early life as follows : “ This boy of excellent disposition, and adorned with many divine gifts—distinguished by the spirit of humility, and engaged in admirable contemplation of the future state—chose the contemplative life, according to the law of ecclesiastical discipline, and lived with the blessed Benign, a priest of the Scottish nation, a man of lofty blood as to nobility, but conspicuous by the still more lofty illustration of holy virtues. Seeking to be instructed by him in the melody of psalms, and in the mellifluous readings of the holy Gospels, and in other divine exercises, his tender age was conformed to his likeness, so that, as if in a wide garden of paradisiacal beauty, he walked from day to day, and by the degrees of virtue, passed into glory. The subtilty of his intelligence was wonderfully developed, so that, by the co-operation of divine grace, he found no difficulty in the study of so many divine things, and in the application of the examples of the just *.”

If some of the instances that follow refer to an

age which might seem too tender to merit consideration, it must be remembered that the mind even of infants was trained to piety. "The soul of the child," says St. Jerome, "is to be educated with a view to its becoming a temple of God. It should hear nothing but what pertains to the fear of God. Let there be letters of ivory," he continues, "with which it may play, and let its play be instruction. No learned man or noble virgin should disdain to take charge of its education*." Children, as he says, were to learn to chant the Psalms, and at seven years of age should know the Psalter by heart; but as for the songs of the world, they were not to know them. In the same Epistle, on the education of an infant, there is something added about frolic, and hanging on its mother's neck, and kissing friends; but there is no mention, as with the moderns, of infants being taught to sing the deductions of arithmetic. Many pious customs observed with children, which do not even want the recommendation of a high degree of poetic grace, will shew the care with which their spiritual interests were attended to in these ages. Thus an Irish monk of the twelfth century relates of St. Patrick—"And a certain woman who was strong in the faith, brought unto the saint her little son, named Lananus, to be instructed in letters; and as she believed that his blessing would render the child more docile and ready unto learning, humbly she besought on her son the benediction of his grace; and he signed the boy with the cross, and delivered him to St. Cassanus, that he might be instructed in virtue and learning. And the boy soon learned the whole Psalter, and afterwards became a man of most holy life." The piety of children, therefore, under the influence of this faith, may be entitled to our regard. "Every age is perfect in Christ,"

* St. Hieronymi Epist. LVII. ad Lætam.

as St. Ambrose says, adding “that even children have confessed Jesus against persecutors *.”

These observations will have prepared us to feel the beauty of the examples following. Thus of St. Blier we read, that while a child, he gave admirable signs of piety and grace. Nothing could be imagined more sweet, benign, gentle, and agreeable, than his whole manner : he seemed like a little angel in human flesh, who used to pray devoutly, visit holy places, converse with saints, and obey the commandments of God with the utmost diligence †. Christine de Pisan says of Louis duc d’Orleans, son of King Charles V. that the first words which were taught him were his Ave-Maria, and that it was a sweet thing to hear him say it, kneeling with his little hands joined before the image of our lady, and that thus early he learned to serve God, which he continued to do all his life ‡. The loyal servant who wrote the life of Bayart, says also, “However young the child was, the first thing that he used to do, as soon as he was risen, was to serve God §.” And Dante, in the Paradise, commemorating the youthful graces of St. Dominic, says of him,

Many a time his nurse at entering found
That he had risen in silence, and was prostrate,
As who should say, “My errand was for this ||.”

Such children were regarded with a kind of reverence, as representing the infant Jesus, and all their little sufferings, sanctified by reference to his, were proposed as a subject of instruction to men. Thus St. Bonaventura says, “Behold and meditate how

* Epist. XXX.

† Desguerroy Hist. du Diocèse de Troyes, p. 170.

‡ Livre des Fais et Bonnes Meurs du sage Roy Charles V. Liv. II. chap. xvi.

§ La Tres Joyeuse Hystoire, &c. Chap. xi.

|| Canto XII.

the Lord, in the person of the infant Jesus, experienced things prosperous and adverse ; and therefore, be not impatient when you find the valley near the mountain. For behold, in his nativity, Christ is magnified by the shepherds as God ; and soon after his birth he is circumcised as a sinner. Then came the magi to worship him, and again he remained in the stable weeping, like any child of man. Afterwards he is presented in the temple, and extolled by Simeon and Anna ; and now it is revealed by an angel, that he must fly into Egypt*.”

From the age succeeding childhood, we have an example in the life of St. Peter Damian, by Joannes Monachus ; for he relates that Peter, when a little boy, happened one day to find some money, and, as if suddenly enriched, he began to rejoice, and to ask himself what he should buy with it. After revolving this matter for a long time, at length he said, “ It is better to give it to a priest, who may offer sacrifice to God for my dead father.” The same motive which made the child an object of reverence, continued to secure respect and tenderness for the boy. St. Bonaventura, in his *Meditations on the life of Christ*, and *Sermons on the festivals of the infant Jesus*, will shew what tenderness for youth was entertained by holy men, from an especial regard to the sufferings of Jesus, in that age ; and his reflections on this subject will serve more, perhaps, than any other passage that could be produced, to give an idea of the beautiful halo which was thrown around it by the spirit of religion. “ The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying that he should fly with the child Jesus and his mother into Egypt. So Joseph, without delay, informs the mother, who is all obedience and zeal to save the life of the child, and they set out in the night to go into Egypt. See

* *Meditationes Vitæ Christi*, Cap. xii.

and meditate on what is said, and how they raise the sleeping child Jesus, and feel compassion for them, for then the tribulation of the mother and Joseph was great, when they found that there was a design against the life of the child: for what could they hear more grievous, since, though they knew that he was the Son of God, yet through their sensuality they might be troubled, and say, ‘Lord God Omnipotent, what need is there that thy Son should fly? Can you not defend him here?’ Moreover, there was tribulation from the length of the journey before them, and their ignorance of the way through rough places, and from their being but ill able to travel; from the youth of Mary, and the old age of Joseph; and the infancy of the child which they had to carry; and they would have to dwell in a foreign land as poor people, having nothing—for all these are matter of affliction. Consider the benignity here shewn, how soon he suffers persecution, and how he yields to the fury of men, and refuses to attack in his turn. The Lord flies before the face of his servant. They fly into Egypt by a way woody and dark, rough and solitary, and very long. For them it was a journey of about two months or more. How did they procure food and lodging for the nights? for rarely did they find houses in that desert. Compassionate them—because the labour was difficult, and great, and long—and go with them, and help to carry the child, and serve them in every way that you can imagine. Now let us behold them arrived; and here will be another ground of meditation. For how did they live during all this time? Did they beg? The mother earned what was needful by spinning; and when the child was five years old, did he not often carry her work for sale? and perhaps at times some proud and loquacious woman would take the work, and send him away empty, without the price. O what injuries await strangers; and the Lord is

come, not to avoid, but to endure them ! What, and if returning home, and having hunger, after the manner of little boys, he asked for bread, and his mother had none to give him ? Must not her bowels have yearned at this ? But she consoled her son, and procured work, and perchance deprived herself of part of her food, that she might reserve it for him. On these and similar things you can meditate respecting the boy Jesus. I have given you the occasion—do you extend and pursue it, and make yourself little with the little boy Jesus—and do not disdain such humble and puerile things. For they seem to give devotion, to increase love, to kindle fervour, to excite compassion, to confer purity and simplicity, to nourish the vigour of humility and poverty, to preserve familiarity, to make conformity, and to raise hope. For we cannot ascend to sublime things ; but the foolishness of God is wiser than men ; and such meditations cut off pride and weaken cupidity, and confound curiosity. Therefore, I say, be little with the little, and grow tall with him, as he grows in stature, and always follow him whithersoever he goes, and always behold his face.

“ At the end of seven years, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘ Take the boy and his mother and go into the land of Israel ; for they are dead who sought the life of the boy.’ Now let us meditate on this return of our Lord, for it is full of pious fruit. Let us suppose ourselves in Egypt, for the sake of visiting the boy Jesus, whom you will find, perhaps, amongst other boys ; and he seeing you, will come up to you, because he is benign and affable, and courteous ; but you bending a knee will kiss his feet, and receive him in your arms and rest with him. Then, perhaps, he will say to you, We have leave given us to return home to our country, and to-morrow we are to set out from hence ; and you will answer joyfully that you are glad of it,

and that you are to go with him wherever he may go, and with such words be delighted with him. And then he will lead you to his mother, who will receive you with courtesy; and you bending a knee will shew her reverence, and also St. Joseph, and you will rest with them. The next morning you will see some good matrons of the city, and also some men coming to see them set off, and following them without the gate of the city, on account of their amiable and holy conversation; and from their having talked of their journey some days before. So they walk on, and Joseph, with the men, goes first, and our lady follows from a distance with the matrons. But do you take the boy by the hand, and walk in the midst before the mother, for she does not wish him to be after her. And when they have passed the outer gate, Joseph will not allow the rest to follow them any longer. Then some one of the richer sort, pitying their poverty, calls the boy to give him some pieces of money towards the expense of the journey, and the boy is ashamed to take it; yet through the love of poverty he prepares his hand, takes the money, and returns thanks; many of the friends do the same: the mother is called by the matrons, and they do the same. Nor has the mother less shame than her son, albeit humbly she thanks them. At length, thanking them all, they wish them farewell, and proceed on their journey. But how is the boy Jesus to return, who is still but a tender child? It seems to me that the return is more difficult than the first coming; for when he came into Egypt, he was so little that he was carried: but now he is so big that he cannot be carried, and yet he is so little that he cannot go by himself. Perchance some one of these good men accommodated them with an ass, upon which he might go. O admirable and delicate boy, King of heaven and earth! how thou hast laboured for us,

and how soon thou didst begin ! well did the prophet predict in your person, '*Pauper sum ego et in laboribus a juventute mea.*' Great poverty, arduous labours, and afflictions of body, thou didst constantly assume, and thou hadst thyself, as if in hatred, for the love of us. Certes this single labour ought to have been enough for our redemption. Take, then, the boy Jesus, and place him upon the ass, and lead him faithfully, and when he wishes to alight take him joyfully in your arms, and let him wait for his mother, and then he will go to his mother, and she will have consolation in receiving him. So they travel onwards, and then pass through the desert by which they came, and during that journey you may often compassionate them, having so little rest ; and behold them fatigued and spent with labour by night as well as by day. And when they were near the end of the desert, they found John the Baptist, who there was doing penance, though he had done no sin. It is said that the place of the Jordan where John baptized, was the same as that where the children of Israel passed when they came from Egypt ; therefore it is probable that the boy Jesus, in returning, found him there. Meditate, then, in what manner he received them, and how they tarried a little with him, and did eat with him of his raw fare, and at length took leave of him spiritually refreshed. Do you also, in advancing and retiring from him, bend the knee to John, kissing his feet and asking his blessing, and commending yourself to him ; for that boy was excellent and wonderful from his cradle ; for he was the first hermit ; he was a most pure virgin, and the greatest preacher, and was more than a prophet, and was also a glorious martyr. And thence Joseph passed into Galilee to Nazareth. And when the child was twelve years old he went up to Jerusalem with his parents, still going through labours ; and he went to honour his heavenly Father in his festivals,

and so he stood observing the law, and conversing humbly along with others, as if he had been only any other poor little boy. And when the days were accomplished his parents returned, and he tarried in Jerusalem.

“ And now attend well, for you will be shewn a devout and fruitful matter. Nazareth was distant about fourteen or fifteen miles from Jerusalem, so when the mother and Joseph, returning by different roads, had reached the place where they were to lodge, it being late, our lady seeing Joseph without the boy, whom she believed had been accompanying him, she asked him, where is the boy? And he replied, I know not; he did not return with me, for I thought he had returned with you. Then she burst into tears, and said, he did not return with me. I see that I have not well guarded my child, and so immediately, that is, as quickly as might accord with decent grace, she went about to all the houses, asking for him, and saying, have you seen my son, did you not see my son; and scarcely through grief and ardour did she feel her desire. Joseph followed her in tears. Not finding him, you can judge what rest that mother had. And though encouraged by her acquaintances, she could not be comforted. For what was it to lose Jesus? Behold her, and compassionate her, because her soul is in straits; never since her birth had she been in such. Let us not, then, be disturbed when we suffer tribulation, since the Lord did not spare his mother; for he permits them to come, and they are signs of his love, and it is good for us to have them. At length, our lady, shutting herself in her chamber, had recourse to prayer and complaint, saying, ‘ O God and eternal Father, most clement and benign, it was your pleasure to give me your Son; but lo, I have lost him, and I know not where he is. Give him back to me. O Father, take away my bitterness, and shew me my

son; have regard to the affliction of my heart, and not to my negligence; I was imprudent, but I did it ignorantly; but give him back to me, for without him I cannot live. O dearest child, where are you? what is become of you? with whom are you? Are you returned to your Father who is in heaven? I know that you are God, and the Son of God, but how, would you not have told me? O say where you are that I may go to you, or that you may come to me. It is but a moment since I have been without you, and I know not how it has happened. Never since you were born was I before alone.' With such words did the mother mourn all the night for her dearest son. Early the next morning they sought for him through all the ways, for there were many ways of returning, as if he that would go from Sienna to Pisa, might go by Podium Bonichi, or by Celle, or by other places. On the third day they found him in Jerusalem, in the temple, in the midst of the doctors. Then she rejoiced as if she had been restored to new life, and bent her knee, and thanked God with tears. But the boy Jesus seeing his mother, came up to her, and she received him in open arms and kissed him, and put face to face, and holding him to her bosom, remained without moving for a short time, because through tenderness she could not then speak. At last, looking on him, she said, Son, what hast thou done? thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he, wherefore didst thou seek me, knewest thou not that I must needs be about my Father's business? But they understood not his words; therefore his mother said to him, Son, I wish to return home, will you not return with us? And he, I will do what you please; and he returned with them to Nazareth.

"You have seen the affliction of the mother; but what was the boy doing during these three days? Mark him attentively. He took up his lodging

with some poor people; himself poor. See him sitting among the doctors, with a countenance placid, wise, and reverend, hearing them and asking them, as if he was ignorant; which he did through humility, and lest he should make them feel ashamed by his wonderful answers. But you must consider here three things very remarkable. First, that he who wishes to adhere to God, ought not to have his conversation with his relations, but to depart from among them; for the boy Jesus dismissed his beloved mother from him when he wished to be about his Father's business, and afterwards he was sought for among his relations and acquaintances, and was not found. Secondly, that he who would live spiritually ought not to wonder, if he should be sometimes left by God, since this happened to the mother of God. Let him not, therefore, despond, but diligently seek him in holy meditations, and persevering in good works, and he will find him again. Thirdly, that he ought not to follow his own will; for when the Lord Jesus said, that he must needs be about his Father's business, he changed his mind and followed the will of his mother, and departed with her, and was subject to her. On his return, then, from the Temple and from Jerusalem, he lived with his parents in Nazareth, and was subject to them till the thirtieth year of his age. What do we suppose he was doing during this time? It is not said in the Scriptures that he did any thing which seemed wonderful. What do we suppose he did? Was he unemployed, that the Scriptures should have recorded no action of his then? It seems altogether amazing; but mark well, and you will perceive that doing nothing he did things magnificent; for none of his actions are without mystery. But as he laboured virtuously, so he kept silence, he remained quiet, and withdrew himself. He went to the synagogue, that is, to the church; he prayed in a humble place, he returned

home; he assisted his mother; he passed and returned amidst men as if he did not see men. All were surprised that so comely a youth should do nothing worthy of praise; they expected that he would do magnificent things, for when a boy, he grew in favour with God and men; but growing up and advancing to thirty years of age, he did nothing remarkable or manly: they began to deride him—he is a useless fellow—good for nothing—a fool. You see, then, what he did while doing nothing: he became abject in the eyes of others. But does this seem little to you? Certainly in all our works this is the most difficult; for he has reached the highest grade of perfection, who, from his heart, and with a mind not feigned, has conquered himself and subdued the pride of the flesh, and is willing to be despised. Greater is that man than he who has conquered a city. Consider, therefore, that you have done nothing until you have effected this; for we are in truth all unprofitable servants, and until we are in this mind, we are not in truth, but we walk in vanity.

“But let us return to a view of the life of our great pattern, our Lord Jesus. Consider, therefore, the poverty and humble state of that blessed family, the mother working with her hands, and the son endeavouring, as far as he was able, to assist her, for he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. So you may consider him arranging the table, and fulfilling all kinds of offices; see how the three eat at one little table every day, and partake not of exquisite fare, but of the commonest and vilest; and consider how holily they conversed together, and how, after some little recreation, they applied themselves to prayer, having no place to meditate but by their beds, for it was but a small house; and consider our Lord Jesus composing himself to sleep upon a poor bed on the floor, as if one of the poorest sons of

the people. O hidden God, wherefore dost thou afflict that innocent body, for the travel of one night ought to have sufficed to redeem the world. Immense love impelled him to this, the fervour of zeal for the lost sheep which he was to carry back to the celestial pastures. Where, then, are they who seek their bodily ease, with curious and varied ornaments? We who desire such things have not been taught in the school of this master; and yet he is the highest master, who neither wished to deceive nor who could be deceived.

“ Having thus completed the twenty-ninth year of his age, our Lord said to his mother, “ It is time that I depart to glorify and make manifest my Father, and work the salvation of souls, for to this end was I sent. Be comforted, good mother, for I shall soon return to you ;” and, bending his knee, he besought her blessing, and she similarly bending, with tears, embraced him. So he departed, and took the road from Nazareth to Jordan, where John was baptizing. But the Lord of the world goes alone, for as yet he had no disciples. Behold him, then, how he goes alone diligently for God, bare-footed, on so long a journey. O Lord, whither goest thou? Art thou not above all the kings of the earth? O Lord, where are thy barons and counts, dukes and soldiers, horses and camels, elephants and chariots, servants and officers? Where are they who may encompass and defend you from sudden attacks, according to the custom of other kings and great men? Where are the blast of trumpets, and the sound of instruments, and the royal banners? Where are they who go before to provide what is needful? Where the honours and pomps which we worms use? Are not the heavens and earth, O Lord, full of thy glory? Do not thousands of thousands minister to thee in thy kingdom? Why, then, goest thou alone thus beating the earth with bare feet? I think the cause

must be, that you are not in your kingdom, for your kingdom is not in this world ; you have humbled yourself, taking the form of a servant ; you are made one of us, a pilgrim and a stranger, as all our fathers were, and this in order that we may be kings. But why do we neglect such an example ? why do we not follow you ? why not humble ourselves ? why seek for pomps and honours ? Certainly because our kingdom is of this world, and we do not consider ourselves strangers. O vain children of men, why do we thus studiously embrace vanity for truth, perishable things for what are secure, and temporal for eternal * ?”

The whole spirit of the middle ages seems to have been infused into this beautiful meditation of St. Bonaventura. Here are expressed almost in painting, their affectionate piety, their intense interest in all that relates to our Saviour and his blessed mother, their sublime sense of the wondrous mysteries of faith ; and, on the other hand, their tender humanity, their sweet simplicity, their innocent and holy manners. Moreover, in especial reference to the present purpose, it furnishes us with the model and type of the youthful character in these ages, illustrating also the grace and dignity with which it was invested in the eyes of men, from a consideration of its being a period of the human life, peculiarly sanctified by the patience and sufferings of Jesus. “ Qui suscepit unum parvulum talem in nomine meo, me suscepit.” Who could enumerate or imagine all the kind, affectionate things, which used to be said and done to poor little innocents from the remembrance of this one sentence ! It is related of St. Felix de Valois, of that royal house of France, who gave proofs of great piety and charity, while a child, that, in his early youth, he used to select the choicest dishes

* St. Bonaventura, *Meditationes Vitæ Christi*.

which were placed on the table, and send them to the poor; and the Church, in her office, does not disdain to add, that he used to recreate poor little boys with nice food, *pauperculos pueros recreabat*. This was he of whom we also read, that when grown up to youth, he more than once gave the clothes off his person to clothe the needy; and who, afterwards, in order to avoid succeeding to the crown of France, to which he had a title by the Salic law, became a priest. It was even deemed worthy of record in a monastic chronicle, that a certain holy monk of Villars, named Godfrey, used to go into the orchard, and whatever fruit he could gather, would hasten with them to the poor children for their refreshment *.

The old writers love to dwell upon the description of this age. Thus the young Archduke Leopold of Austria is described as having the looks as well as the innocence of an angel; and it is said that the mere sight of him in the church used to inspire people with devotion†. The young St. Francis Regis, while at college at Puy, was known to all the inhabitants of the town under the title of the Angel of the College‡. There might have been seen a young nobleman, a modest novice in a religious order, employed in collecting the poor little boys of a town and explaining to them the Christian doctrine. What school of ancient philosophy ever conceived any thing like this?

The exquisite grace with which the old Italian painters represented the youthful form in the angelic character, could only be the result of having beheld living models imbued with that grace and celestial sweetness which the Catholic religion is capable of

* *Hist. Monasterii Villariensis. Lib. II. cap. viii. apud Martini Thesaur. Anecd. Tom. iii.*

† *Les Vertus de Leopold d'Autriche, par Avancin, 13.*

‡ *Vie de St. François Regis, p. 16.*

yielding to the human countenance. Witness the picture by Francesco Albani, of the school of Bologna, of the Repose in Egypt, which is in the gallery of the Louvre at Paris, where two angels, as youths, are offering fruits and flowers to the infant Jesus, whom they regard with an expression of the utmost interest, of innocent curiosity and child-like love, as he plays on the knees of his mother; a picture which seems to breathe perfume, and which might have inspired Tasso in his beautiful description of the gentle Gabriel when he is sent to Godfrey.

A stripling seem'd he thrice five winters old,
 And radiant beams adorn'd his locks of gold.
 Of silver wings he took a shining pair,
 Fringed with gold, unwearied, nimble, swift,
 With these he parts the winds, the clouds, the air,
 And over seas and earth himself doth lift.
 Thus clad, he cut the spheres and circles fair
 And the pure skies with sacred feathers clift;
 On Lebanon at first his foot he set,
 And shook his wings with rosy May-dew wet*.

Men were impressed with such a sense of the respect due to youthful piety, that even the title of martyr used to be granted to such young persons as met with death from the hands of unjust men. Thus St. Kenelm was regarded as a martyr, though all that is related of his death is as follows: "Ingulphus, abbot of Crowland, says that St. Kenelm was the son of Kenulphus, king of the Mercians, and a great benefactor to the monastery of Crowland, which had been lately founded by King Ethalbald. Kenelm was left heir to the crown in his seventh year; he was enticed into a wood by the craft of Quendreda, and it being late in the evening that most innocent boy was cruelly martyred by Ascebert, his tutor." William of Malmesbury indeed supposes that such men as St. Dunstan would never have allowed

* Book I. 14.

Kenelm or Egelbrith to be venerated as martyrs unless God had confirmed their title by miracles * ; but devout people were willing at all times to have recourse to the holiness of youth as possessing a grace that was self-evident. Thus, in the church of St. Hilary at Paris, there was the tomb of a young student of the college of Harcourt, called Louis Pelet : his death was stated to have taken place in the year 1747, without mention of the month or day, but the inscription was terminated with these words, " Sancte puer, ora pro nobis †."

In like manner all the sufferings of that age were regarded with great tenderness, and inspired somewhat of reverence. In our times the young English students in the distant schools of Spain and Portugal used to be regarded with wonderful interest by the devout people of those lands who commiserated their condition in being sent so far from their country. It used to be a common opinion with the captains of vessels from England to Bilboa, that it was a good pledge for them when they had on board an English student for Valladolid. On one occasion of a storm in the Bay of Bisquai, the captain hearing that a certain youth was one of these students going thither, became quite cheerful and composed, observing, that since this student was on board they had nothing to fear. Generally too, on the death of young persons, it was obvious, that in certain minor customs established by the Church, it was her intention to indicate her sense of the peculiar innocence and purity which belonged to that age. • But to proceed. The young who were in the walks of secular life became subject to the prevailing influence of chivalry, and in this respect the duties of their condition were enforced with a systematic attention to the preservation of

* De Gest. Pontif. Anglic. Lib. V.

† Lebeuf, Hist. du Diocèse de Paris, Tom. I. chap. v.

innocence and humility. Homer makes Minerva address Telemachus in a style the converse of that which is adopted by the modern guides of youth, though similar to that which was common in Christian ages: she says to him, "Few sons are like their fathers; the greatest number are worse, and but very few better*." The young were willing to admit the justice of the ancient sentence, "In antiquis est sapientia, et in multo tempore prudentia." To respect age and every superior rank, and to be gracious and kind to inferiors, were duties from the observance of which the natural benevolence of youth was not prevented by any false theory of sophists or conventional rules of society. As for public and political affairs, even Socrates, though such a friend to the young, says that they are never qualified to take a part in them; and he alleges as a reason, that they admire and will follow any artful intriguer who may pursue his private ends under a specious shew of virtue, whom good men will hate and fly from†. Aristotle also denies that young men can have political wisdom: "they can be geometricians and mathematicians, but not wise statesmen; for it is experience alone and length of age which can give political wisdom‡." With respect to reverence for age and kindness towards inferiors, we have abundant testimony to the disposition of the young during ages of faith. Eliu, who does not presume to speak to Job before his elder friends, might be taken to represent them in the former respect; and an instance of the latter kind may be seen in what is related of St. Martin, for when a youth, being forced to go to the wars along with the other sons of old soldiers whom the emperor Constantius commanded to be enrolled, he was sent by his father with a

* Od. II. 276.

† De Repub. Lib. VIII.

‡ Ethic. Lib. VI. cap. viii.

servant to wait upon him; the young Martin, however, treated him not like a servant but like a companion, serving him as much as he was served by him, pulling off his boots, cleaning his clothes, and serving him at table*. Indeed, by the laws of chivalry, youth was trained to such services, and in this respect it was retained in that condition alluded to by St. Paul when he says “*Dico autem quanto tempore hæres parvulus est, nihil differt à servo cum sit dominus omnium* †.” It was also a maxim of religion, expressly inculcated, that young people should be obliging, willing to serve, doing readily the duty which presents itself, and helping also a servant in his work as occasion may require ‡. The remark of the cautious and selfish Cardan on this point is amusing: “Boys,” he says, “are much better for your service than men, ‘*pueri sunt in omnibus, (præterquam gravibus) ministeriis, viris meliores; quia magis assidui, prompti, diligentes, obediētes, mundi, minoris sumtus; et verberari possunt* §.’” But on the other hand, while youth was maintained in its proper degree of subordination, there was no concealment of the real benefits which an attention to its disposition might yield even to men of mature wisdom. There would have been wise men to agree with Plato without his implied censure where he says, “The old men, sitting with the young, are filled with cheerfulness and grace of manner, imitating the young that they may not seem disagreeable and imperious ||. Sir Henry Sidney says, in advice to his son Robert, “In your travels seek the knowledge of the estate of every prince, court, and city that you pass through. Address

* Ribadeneira, *Lives of the Saints*, Novem. X.

† *Ad Galat.* iv.

‡ *Christian Instructions for Youth*, p. 10.

§ *Prudentia Civilis*, cap. xxxix.

|| *De Repub.* VIII

yourself to the company to learn this of the elder sort, and yet neglect not the younger: by the one you shall gather learning, wisdom, and knowledge, by the other, acquaintance, languages, and exercise," an advantage so feelingly appreciated by the bard of chivalry in the simple lines—

And much I miss those sportive boys
Companions of my river joys,
Just at the age 'twixt boy and youth,
When thought is speech and speech is truth.

St. Bernard begins his letter to a young man named Fulco, saying, "*Inde lætari in adolescentia unde in senectute non pœniteat* *." Under this direction there was nothing condemned or despised by the men of these ages in the simple pleasures of youth. Perhaps they too, at whose feet now sat disciples, were once the nimblest of the jocund band, used, long as it suited the unripened down that fledged their cheek, to be the foremost in every wild adventurous game, used to ply the hearty oar, to head the mimic chace, to sing, swimming, to the sound of the broken rushes, and each would now apply the poet's description to himself—

It was then that around me, though poor and unknown,
High spells of mysterious enchantment were thrown;
The streams were of silver, of diamond the dew,
The land was an Eden, for fancy was new.

Their wisdom would have approved of Heraclitus, when, after resigning the government of his city, which was torn with factions, and being found playing with some boys in a porch, he asked those who wondered at him, whether it was not better to play with such boys than govern such men? The writers of the middle ages indicate continually how deeply they can feel, from the purity and simplicity of their

lives, the beauty of whatever belongs to the innocent joys of nature. Without any gloomy reflection on their own advanced progress in the human course, they love to describe the sportive raptures of the young. "Youth's smiling morn," they say, "enjoys a beautiful horizon; that magic distance is wondrous fair, so long as the soul has never been soiled by the world's base affection." The good abbot Desnay gave the money for Bayart's horses to his companion Bellabre, saying of the young page, "*Car il a encore la barbe trop jeune pour manyer deniers* *." Here was assuredly a happy privilege, and one which the spirit of "the scholastic romantic ages" then secured for the young! Their's was but one sentiment, "Bref. c'est une diablerie quant avarice precede l'honneur †." The selfish prudence of Cardan saw clearly the distinctive quality of the young in this respect, and was for turning it to account. "To retain boys or youths to serve you well," he says, "it is necessary that they be excited either to wisdom or to music, or to conjunctions for the sake of play, or to huntings, for with such things you will command them, viros detinebis stipendiis ‡."

The dexterous ingenuity of youth was often employed by holy persons to facilitate the success of their charitable and saintly labours. An amusing instance of this kind is related by St. Theresa. While she was at Toledo, in great difficulties, and at a loss to find a house in which to establish the convent she intended to found; "One day," she says, "there came up to me a young man, named Andrada, who said that he had been sent to me by his father confessor, a Franciscan, named father Martin of the

* *La tres joyeuse, plaisante et recreative hystoire des faicts, gestes, triomphes et prouesses du bon chevalier, sans paeur et sans reprouche, le gentil Seigneur de Bayart.* Chap. vii.

† *Ibid.* Chap. xxvi. ‡ *Prudentia Civilis*, Cap. xxxix.

Cross, who was aware of all our difficulties. He came up to me in a church, where I was hearing mass, to offer me all the service in his power, which, however, could not exceed that of his personal labour. I thanked him; and my companions, as well as myself, were somewhat amused to think that this holy man should have sent us such an assistance, because the young man did not appear to me to be exactly the person proper to treat with barefooted Carmelites. Some time after, when I received permission to make the foundation, but still had no assistance, and being greatly at a loss, I began to call to mind this young man, and I spoke of him to my companions; but they could not help laughing, and bid me have a care how I trusted him, for he would only disclose our secret. Nevertheless, as he had been sent to me by a great servant of God, I determined to send for him. After charging him to be very discreet, I asked him if he thought he could hire a house for us in Toledo? Without an instant's hesitation, he engaged to do it, with great joy, and, in fact, the next morning he came to me in the church of the Jesuits, and told me he had hired a house close to ours, and that he had brought the keys in his pocket. We found, upon trial, that it suited our purpose perfectly, and there we established ourselves. Now how strange was all this! Here had been rich and important people, giving themselves constant trouble, for two or three months, to seek a house for us, without being able to find one in all Toledo, and this young man, who has nothing but his good-will, procures us one immediately *!"

During these ages, the condition of youth in secular life, with respect to happiness, has struck the imagination even of modern writers; one of whom says,—“If there be any thing, indeed, in the poetry

* Foundation at Toledo.

of old romance, in which we may indulge, as a true picture of chivalrous delight, it is in its representations of the pleasures of a young and noble squire, occupied incessantly in some pursuit that added to the graces of his person, or to his hilarity of feeling : he had the brightest visions that hope could possibly possess." And in the same page, he is obliged to record, that this happy youth was taught to avoid pride, anger, envy, idleness, gluttony, and luxury ; to keep the commandments inviolably ; to treasure in his heart the XII articles of faith ; to exercise the VII principal virtues, in contradistinction to the VII mortal sins, and to perform the VII works of spiritual mercy, in saving people from error, as well as the VII works of corporal mercy, which embraced all works of charity done to the body. So far this writer. In fact, the habit once acquired of directing the intention to the glory of God, according to the spirit of these ages, every thing in the life of men was sanctified, and even the joys and triumphs of youth were enhanced, as well as rendered innocent ; for the extinction of selfishness rendered joy and triumph pure and glorious to the heart. Religion to them was fidelity, obedience, chivalry ; and all the noble and joyous sentiments of nature were cherished. In the lowest, as well as in the highest dignity, to be the servants of the servant of God was the great object of this spiritualized and refined ambition. The youth was happy and innocent, even amidst the pomp and exultation of his moments of triumph ; for all his grace and glory were to impress the minds of others with a sense of the dignity and importance of his master, who was himself the minister of Divine Providence, to maintain the order and felicity of the holy state of a Christian people. In himself he was nothing ; his heart was never for an instant directed to his own selfish interests, for his interests were all lapsed into those

of his order, of his fellow Christians, of his God. How beautifully is this shewn in the expression which occurs in *Perceforest*, where there is a description of a young man being knighted: "Now said the king, it only remains that I give you the accolade, which I am willing to do; but you must first promise me, that you will, above all things, honour God, who made heaven and earth. After that you must swear to follow the lessons and doctrines which have just been given you. Then answered the youth, his eyes being tearful with devout thoughts, 'this I have promised to do.'" Here is an admirable trait of nature. Men now say, "thoughtless youth;" whereas in fact, youth runs wild in superabundance of thought, and it was to give this culture and direction that the various parts of Catholic discipline were framed and exercised.

The description which Christine de Pisan gives of Louis duc de Bourbon, fourth brother of king Charles V., in his youth, is peculiarly interesting, from her continuing to shew how his character, in after life, was affected by his early manners. She says, "he was a vessel of all goodness, clemency, benignity, and sweetness. *En sa juenece fu prince bel, joyeux, festoyant et de hounorable amour amoureux et sans pechié: joyeux gentil en ses manieres, benigne en parolles, large en dons, d'accueil si gracieux que tiroit à luy amer princes, princesses, chevaliers, nobles, et toutes gens qui le veoyent*; but when this good duke came to maturer years, all this joyous and innocent youth turned into sense and moderation, good counsel, devotion, and constancy, and though his manners were always praiseworthy, yet now the degrees of his virtue increased still more. The virtue of charity shone forth in him; he used to succour poor gentlemen, and give great gifts to poor monks and poor clerks, and to poor scholars, and to all poor people of every con-

dition he is piteous and a great almoner ; he gives great alms in secret, has great faith towards God, and ever turns to him in his necessities *." Yet it often happened with young persons in secular life, that the least circumstance was able to inflame them with a desire of passing immediately to a state of Christian perfection. Thus we read in a Chronicle : " There was a monk of Villars, named Daniel, whose father was the uncle of the lady Clemence de Rixensart. Upon leaving the schools, he wished to have recourse to the vanity of tournaments at Senges, and there he became a soldier ; but being attacked by sickness, his resolution was changed, and he determined to militate for God in the monastery of Villars ; for seeing the world to pass and its concupiscence, he remembered his Creator in the days of his youth, and redeemed the time by living innocently †."

So far we have attended only to the condition of the young in the walks of secular life, where it cannot be denied, if in those times there were many things to assist and preserve innocence and poverty of spirit, there were also many peculiar sources of danger. " The youthful aspirant to chivalry," as a modern writer observes, in extolling the happiness of such a person, " did not want occasions of great excitement. He fought in presence of princes, shared in triumphs to which royalty lent its pomp and magnificence, heard his name shouted amid the proud blasts of clarions, and in the fiercest onset felt his ardent spirit rejoicing in deeds, the fame of which his gallant followers would publish through every quarter of the land." But amidst all this pomp of mundane glory are we not sometimes tempted to recall to memory the humble saintly student, so far

* Livre des Fais, &c. Tom. II. Chap. xiv.

† Hist. Monast. Villar. Lib. II. Cap. xiii. Apud Marteni Thesaur. Anecd. Tom. III.

from the world's eye, in the cloistered shade? Are we not sometimes tempted, in presence of so many obstacles to virtue, so many dangers to innocence, to exclaim with St. Bernard, "*Quid facitis, juvenes, qui flores juventutis vestræ offertis Diabolo, et fæces senectutis vestræ Deo? Securius esset cum Abel primitias Deo offerre;*" and then to say with the Christian poet, in allusion to the image before our mind,—"*O thrice happy the child whom the Lord loves, who hears his voice betimes, and whom God himself deigns to instruct: nourished far from the world, adorned from first youth with all the gifts of heaven, the contagious company of the wicked taints not his innocence. So grows the young lily, in a retired vale, on the banks of a limpid stream, sheltered from the wind of the north, the object of Nature's love * !*"

To believe that the piety of youth was something eminently celestial and gracious, seems to have been according to the universal sentiment of mankind. Will you hearken to the Hebrew rabbins? "*Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;*" say they, youth is the worthier age, for that visions are nearer apparitions of God than dreams. This is what Lord Bacon remarks †. The ancients too have left some engaging portraits, illustrative of their views in this respect. Thus Æschylus says of one, "*When his eyes first saw the light of life, and in the growth of infancy, and in the advancing years of youth, and in the riper age that clothes with gradual down the manly cheek, did justice and love divine mark him for their own ‡.*" And Euripides beautifully introduces the innocence of the sacerdotal youth, when it is made the instrument of preserving Io from poison; for he represents him as about to

* Racine, *Athalie*, II. 9. † Of the Advancement of Learning.

‡ Sept. cont. Theb.

lift the fatal cup to his lips : the boy was about to depart from life, and no one knew it ; but as he held the goblet in his hands, one of the servants, who stood near, uttered a blasphemous word, but he, having been nourished in the temple in holy discipline,—

ὁ δ' ὡς ἐν ἱερῷ μάντεσιν τ' ἐσθλοῖς τροφεῖς,
οἰωνὸν ἔθετο.

immediately moved it back, and called upon them to fill for him another fresh cup ; and that which he had before in his hands, he poured out upon the ground. Thus was his life preserved ; for that draught contained the deadly poison, which is soon discovered, by the torments of the doves which taste it*. But that the gentleness and piety of their youth was rather a constitutional disposition in a few, than the result of any moral discipline or religious belief, capable of transforming and directing it, may be inferred from a passage in Plato, where Theodorus says, in alluding to the young, “ It is very difficult to find the same person ingenious, quick to learn, and at the same time mild ; and, in addition to all this, manly. Truly I do not think that there ever was such a person, nor do I behold any one so constituted by nature. For they who are sharp and sagacious, and endowed with memory, are prone to anger and subject to be carried away by passion, like ships without a cable ; whereas the grave, when they apply to learning, are oblivious, and slow, and torpid † :” and Ulysses, in his reply to Euryalus, makes a remark somewhat similar, observing, that the gods seldom give to the same person beauty of person, and gentleness and wisdom in conversation to correspond to it ‡. From a remarkable passage in Cicero, indeed, it would appear that the majority of men in those times entertained sentiments which

* Io, 1200.

† Plat. Theætetus.

‡ Od. VIII. 167.

would have made the sanctity of Christian youth appear to them in no amiable light. His words are these, speaking of Cœlius : " Truly, O judges, if he were a youth of such strength of mind and continence that he would reject all pleasures, and spend all the course of his life in labours of body and contention of mind, whom no repose or remission, no pursuits of his equals, no plays, no banquets, delighted; who would think that nothing was to be sought for in life but what was joined with praise and dignity; I should regard him as endowed and adorned with certain divine goods, and perhaps a few other men would consider him as one to whom the gods were propitious. The multitude would suppose that he was one with whom they were angry *." However, the sentiments which seem generally to prevail with the moderns on the subject of youthful virtue, are rather lower than above the standard unfolded by Cicero in this celebrated Oration. Leaving them to argue in support of their respective views, I turn to contemplate the lives of the young under the influence of religion, in Catholic ages, and to produce examples which will shew with what peculiar justice the Christian poet might exclaim with Chaucer,

Sweet is the holiness of youth.

But to introduce these, a few observations may be needful. In the first place, then, let it be remembered that the mind of the young must ever be devoted either to an idea or to sense, either to an object of faith, (and youth is peculiarly qualified for possessing faith), or to that visible form of good which ministers to animal excitement. If the citadels of the souls of the young be left void of pure and noble images, they will be taken possession of by

* Pro M. Cœlio, 17.

those that are contrary to them: if not guarded by the bright symbols of beauteous and eternal things, error and death, moral death, with all its process of intellectual degradation, will plant their pale flag there. The best guards, Socrates said, "are in the thoughts of men who are loved by God:" οἱ δὲ ἄριστοι φρουροί τε καὶ φύλακες ἐν ἀνδρῶν θεοφιλῶν εἰσὶ διανοίαις*. But if the young are not guests at the sacred banquet of pure and angelic spirits, they will go to the Lotuseaters, and dwell with them in stupid sensuality. As with the intellectual direction, so is it with the manners and intercourse of youth—for these will ever be directed after one or other of two types—either by the spirit of sweetness and love, or by that of insolence and malignity. All systems of education that are merely human, and under the guidance of rationalism, will ever nourish and fortify, when they do not even recognise and extol the latter; for being formed on merely natural principles, all that belongs to man's unkindness will have free scope to be developed and exercised within their dominion; and therefore cruel mocking, dissipation, disobedience, tyranny, and the will and ability to oppress weaker companions will entitle the youth who has sufficient tact, to know how far precisely these qualities may be exercised with the applause of animal minds, to the enviable character of possessing a manly spirit. He will discover too, that his father may have only one desire respecting him, like that of Jason, in the tragedy, whose sole prayer for his sons is, that he may see them grown to manhood, well nourished and vigorous, that they may be a defence to him against his enemies†. In studies also, emulation will be carried to an excess which renders the youthful mind obnoxious to all the worst attendants on ambition.

* De Repub. Lib. VIII.

† Eurip. Medea, 918.

So that, under these modern systems, while education conduces to victory, their victory, as Socrates says, will often undo the work of education; for, through victory, many are rendered insolent and obnoxious to a thousand evils. And education, that which deserves the name of education, "is never Cadmeian; but many victories are and will be such to men *." In days of old chivalry, the place for a tournament was generally selected in a part which had the city on one side and a forest on the other. The vanquished knight is generally represented as quitting the scene of his humiliation, and hastening to the forest, to afford him the shelter which was the object in view when making this particular disposition of the lists; and during the same period it was the constant assurance of religion, that, in the various trials of life, from youth to age, it was often better to return as if by way of the forest, rather than hasten to the city with the exulting multitude of admirers. But, according to the rational, or merely natural view of education, such an opinion will be wholly inadmissible; and not only will success be pursued with an utter recklessness of its moral results; not only will the soul become less mild and less humble, but the exact converse will ensue of what Socrates represents as the great and only end of all discipline, saying, "We have two qualities in our souls, which we must preserve with equal solicitude; the one which prompts us to dare, and the other which constrains us to fear—to be bold for virtue and to be afraid in respect to vice †." They will at best be but timid friends to virtue, and bold in the applause of every theory that wears the semblance of an impious spirit. But in the schools of Christians, in ages of faith, neither victories, nor any other part of discipline, were Cadmeian; nor

* Plat. de Legibus, Lib. I.

† Ibid.

was there any disposition generated opposed to the utmost humility ; but the buoyancy of youthful spirits was directed in such a manner, that it developed itself in all the innocent and engaging expressions of gentleness and friendship. There was, indeed, something most divine in the temper and manners which this discipline imparted to the young ; for nature alone could never have possessed such acuteness, joined with so much simplicity, and joyous frankness, such warmth and energy, along with such purity and angelic innocence. The stranger, who approached their assemblies, received a greeting like that which Dante met with from those bright spirits which he beheld within a circle of paradise, from whom one came forth and said,

We all
Are ready at thy pleasure, well disposed
To do thee gentle service*.

In every country, the youthful mind was moulded to this type, as long as education continued to be purely Catholic, and untainted with the influence of the modern spirit and examples ; but wherever these were able to exercise any sway, there was introduced more or less of pride and reserve, and a desire of seeming to be peculiarly knowing, with a disposition to depreciate others and give pain, to ridicule and suspect ; in other words, there was a return to the mere natural qualities of youth, when these were not even perverted still farther from primal goodness ; there was a return to that temper alluded to by Socrates, where he says that “ boys, when they first begin to taste the pleasure of words, use them as a kind of play, continually employing them in contradiction, and imitating the disputants, they dispute with one another, rejoicing like young puppies,

always dragging and tearing whatever is near them by words; and he warns elder men from following this mode of puerile contradiction*:" instead of humility and penitence, there was pride, and the sharpness of a pert and nimble spirit—

Pro molli violâ, pro purpureo narcisso,
Carduus et spinis surgit paliurus acutis.

In the second place it should be borne in mind, that in the ages of faith men felt the impossibility of educating souls for God and for the world also; and therefore the latter had, no doubt, grounds to make many objections against the system which they adopted. It had reason to complain of youth being kept in ignorance of its maxims, without any knowledge of some books, and other objects which it admired, and even, perhaps, without the ability or the spirit to secure many of its interests, which it might deem most important. Plato had so sublime a sense of a just education, that he acknowledges that the good, when young, will appear to be weak and simple, and that they will easily be deceived by the unjust, *ἀτε οὐκ ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς παραδείγματα ὁμοιοπαθεῖν τοῖς πονηροῖς*: for he too would not allow the young to acquire that knowledge of the world which was so carefully excluded from Catholic schools, but which is now thought so essential to children. "If he is to be a good and honourable man, fair and good, and able to form a sound judgment of what is just, he must, when young, be without experience and wholly without a mixture of evil manners†; for he only is good who has a good soul, *ὁ γὰρ ἔχων ψυχὴν ἀγαθὴν, ἀγαθός*, which he cannot possess who has a personal acquaintance with evil." Are we disposed to question this proposition?

* Plato, de Repub. Lib. VII.

† Ibid. Lib. III.

Hear what Fuller acknowledges, a writer only remarkable for his candour in publishing of himself what other men would conceal of their own experience: "Almost twenty years since," he says, "I heard a profane jest, and still remember it," "I lost honour, say the Spaniards, by speaking ill and hearing worse." The old poet, Claude de Morenne, acknowledges in one of his pieces that he had read certain poems in his youth which had done an injury to his imagination and to his heart, which nothing could repair*. This is the dreadful effect of renouncing the ancient discipline. Such is the stain which reading of this description impresses upon the mind, that the moral consequences seem among those "which never may be cancelled from the book wherein the past is written:" once blighted, the bloom of innocent fancy is faded for ever. It remains only for the sufferer to say, after the manner of Pilate, what I have read I have read, and to warn others from the rock against which he has made shipwreck of that imagination, of which every flight had been an extasy, and every expression a hymn of praise. But if there were restraints and privations in the discipline of Christian antiquity, though it is incorrect to style that privation, which was only a measure to prevent the loss of good, there was full liberty for the exercise and development of every gracious and noble faculty. "The gardener," says St. Anselm, "gives space and freedom to young plants, that they may grow and spread forth their sweet branches, and so should masters provide indulgence for the young, who, by oblation, are planted in the garden of the Church, that they may increase and bear fruit to God. They ought not to be cramped and restrained by terrors, threats, and stripes†." Would we hearken

* Gouget, Biblioth. Franc. Tom. XIV. 54.

† De Similitudinibus, Cap. clxxvii.

to an old monk who relates an instance amusing for its simplicity? There were in the Abbey of Ramsey four boys who had been formerly placed there by St. Oswald, before they were seven years old, and they had now grown up to puberty like branches of the olive, promising abundant fruit in due season. These were Æthericus, Ædnothus, Oswald, and Æthelstan. They were all youths of good birth, of innocent manners, and of beautiful form. That they might not be overfatigued by the rigour of the order, and according to the proverb, "*quod caret alterna requie durabile non est*," they were allowed at certain times in the week to go, with leave of their masters, without the cloistral walls, for the sake of juvenile play. On one of these occasions they ran to the cords of the greater bells, which are in the western tower of the church, and one of these they rang with all the force of their weak arms, until, by the unequal motion, it was suddenly cracked, which became instantly perceptible by the sound. This being discovered, the masters and the other brethren were excited to anger, even to threaten the infliction of stripes upon the boys, who were weeping bitterly, till at length they remembered the sentence which they had so often heard read in chapter, as prescribed by St. Benedict, "*Ut qui perdiderit quicquam aut fregerit, alios in delicti sui accusatione festinet prævenire*," so hastening to the feet of the Abbot, with many tears, they related what they had done. That discreet man compassionating their distress, consoled them, and calling the brethren, said, "These innocents have committed a fault, not intentionally, but contrary to their intention; not willingly, but against their will. They ought to be spared, therefore, and that will not be neglecting the duty which we owe to our community, for when these boys come to years of maturity, being of noble houses, it will be easy for them to indemnify us for the loss." Then dismissing

the monks, he secretly admonished the boys, who, entering the church with bare feet, made their devotions and vows ; and that their pure prayers were favourably heard, was sufficiently seen at a subsequent time, when being grown up and exalted to honours, not forgetting their vows, they conferred signal benefits upon that church*. The care of religious men to educate the young was not confined to supplying them with oral or written instruction. It was for them especially that religion loved, under the form of the fine arts, to impress on the material elements around, the stamp of ideal humanity, that as Fichte says, “ at their very awakening into life, they might be environed by noble objects, such as by a certain sympathetic power, would educate the outward senses, whereby the education of the inner man might be greatly facilitated.” It was the object of education not so much to impart a variety of knowledge, as to cultivate that mind which would be able either to reap the benefit of knowledge subsequently obtained, where an extraordinary degree of knowledge was required, or to discharge the ordinary duties of life with honesty and perseverance to the end, where there was no occasion for acquiring such a distinction. Agreeable to this plan, the young were to be thoroughly imbued with a delicate and profound sense of every thing noble and gracious, which would be alike useful to all ; that, to borrow a simile from Plato, as the young who inhabit a healthy spot are benefitted by every thing around them, so whatever was thrown before them from beautiful deeds, whether in the way of seeing or of hearing, like an air from pure places bearing health, might lead them to a similitude, and friendship, and harmony, with what is good and fair† ; and, as Plutarch says,

* Hist. Ramesiensis, Cap. lxvii. apud Gale. Hist. Brit. Tom. III.

† De Repub, III.

“ What they heard and saw in youth without understanding it, in all its exact relations and detail, they learned to comprehend fully in maturer life, like the inhabitants of that city which Antiphanes used to describe, where all words that had been spoken in winter, froze in the air, and were not heard till the summer came to thaw them, but then not a syllable was lost, for every one heard what had been said to him the winter before*.” No doubt, to the world’s eye, the prospects of Christian youth were poor spirited and obscure : but the question from the Mount, the only question we have here to answer, is this, were they inconsistent with the beatitude of the poor ? “ Our life,” says a Catholic poet, “ is like the chrystal flood, which leaves its native rock humble and unnamed. While it sleeps at the bottom of the basin which nature has made for its bed, all the flowers of the field perfume its path, and the azure of a beautiful sky descends wholly into it, but hardly escaped from the arms of its hills, hardly are its waters enabled to spread themselves over the plain, than its wave becomes corrupt and pale with the filth of the soil which its course disturbs ; the shade which once sheltered it flies now from its banks, the naked rock confines its fugitive waters ; disdaining to follow the gracious windings of its paternal valley, it proudly aspires to engulph itself under profound arches, where it may receive a name brilliant as its foam ; with precipitous bounds it bears along with it barks rumours, the filth of cities : each river which swells it is a new source of defilement, till it arrives at the term, when swollen with so many adulterous waves, it moves on great but troubled, parting with a vain name as it rolls into the bosom of the sea its pollutions and its glory. Happy in the depth of the wood is the pure and humble spring, happy the lot

* How to perceive one’s progress in Virtue.

which is concealed in a life of obscurity *.” It should be observed moreover, that the ancient discipline was not framed upon a calculation of the spiritual being subordinate to the material parts of nature, but in conformity with the opposite conclusion. In this respect again it was in accordance with that excellent reason which guided Plato, for he says in speaking of the necessity of gymnastics and music in the education of youth, that the latter is still more important even for the body. “For,” he says, “it does not seem to me that when the body is good, the soul will by its means become good ; but I hold the converse to be true, that the good soul will by its virtue enable the body to become as good as possible †.”

I must proceed now to produce examples, the beauty and force of which perhaps without these preliminary observations might not have been immediately understood ; but all this humble matter is intended for the ear of those who are themselves children of the first beatitude. “When Clotaire, son of Clovis, held the sceptre of France, there lived,” says an ancient writer, “a nobleman named Florentin, rich in possessions, wise in council, valiant in war while employed in it, but always desirous of maintaining peace. Above all, he lived as a true gentleman and greatly Catholic, and his wife yielded to no one in piety and all grace. They had a son, Evode, whom the holy mother bred up to all virtue and Catholic piety, as well as to the civil decorum of nobility. On being put to school he was well instructed in both human and sacred learning, and from this time charity took her seat in his innocent heart, benignity on his tongue and purity in his body. His parents seeing him all devoted to God, loved him the more, and placed him in the Church of Rouen to render

* De Lamartine, *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses*, I. 12.

† De Repub. III.

the services which his devout heart loved, where he lived in great justice and piety towards God, and in sweetness and patience towards men. Every one that saw him judged him to be a little angel in human form, so pure was he in life, so serene and smiling of countenance, so sweet in words, so beautiful in person, so filled with all goodness *."

The sanctity of the youth of Wala, who was afterwards abbot of Corby, is described by Paschasius: "During the day he used to moisten the earth with his sweat, and during the night with his tears. At night, both before and after the vigils of the brethren, he used to lie prostrate on the ground before the holy altar; and I have myself often seen his tears fall upon the pavement while he was at prayer." St. Jerome says, "that from the moment Hilarion first saw the blessed man, St. Anthony, he resolved to dwell with him in the desert, and the devil beheld himself vanquished by a boy *." St. Bernard, in his youth, had celestial visions. On one Christmas eve, after he had been long meditating on the mystery of the incarnation, he beheld our Saviour in a dream, as if still in his human infancy, and the sight so charmed him, that he thenceforth could think of nothing but how to serve God in the best way he might. When St. Bernard, with his brethren and companions, had prepared to set out for a monastery of Cistercians, it happened that Guy, the elder brother, found Nivardus, the youngest of all the brothers, playing in the street with other boys, and said to him, "Nivardus, God be with thee: we go to religion and leave thee heir of all our goods." To these words the child answered, "What! do you take heaven for yourselves, and leave me earth?"

* Desguerrois, Hist. du Diocèse de Troyes, p. 409.

† Vita ejus.

this is not an equal division." And accordingly, some days after, he also followed his brothers and entered into the monastery. This is one of the many instances to which I alluded in the beginning, as furnishing an insight into the character of an entire generation of men ; for the occurrence of a scene like this assuredly indicates a very remarkable state of society.

But to return to history. "In the days of Hugues Capet, king of France," says an ancient chronicle, "Aderal was born at Troyes, of noble parents, who were both devout ; he was a child of a sweet disposition, so that he no sooner ceased to be an infant than he conducted himself like a little saint. He studied not under masters who teach only worldly civilities, but under pious priests and clerks of the church of St. Peter, at Troyes. He remained with these good men, who, seeing in him so many indexes of a holy life, had great care of him, and loved him for his docility and promptitude to correspond with the grace of God. He was soon made an acolythe in the church of Troyes, in the discharge of which office he gave content and edification to every one. On the holy day of Easter, and during its octave in the church of Troyes, it is the custom for the two acolythes, who carry the lighted tapers before the celebrating bishop, to be presented with these tapers after the office, to do with them what they like. The holy youth, on this occasion, receiving the gift of the tapers along with his companion, after the pious rites of the day, sold them, and with the money gave alms to the poor, and procured for himself a small reliquary to contain some bones of saints to wear on his person. Such was the piety of this innocent soul, offering its first fruits, and all that it possessed, to God *." It was not alone the young men who

* Desguerroy, Hist. du Diocèse de Troyes, p. 247.

were regularly received into houses of religion and churches, that were employed to serve at the Divine altars. The faithful were one family, and every little son was trained sufficiently to exercise, upon occasion, this angelic ministry, to which he might be invited even where he was himself a stranger, and to offer to God in the morning that silver voice, the pure and limpid echo of his youthful soul. His sweet and gracious image was in the mind of other children of the town, who, as the poet says, would pray that they might be good, though little like him whom they saw each morning in the temple. Benignity and grace they seemed to learn even from the movements that the holy ritual prescribed, as in beholding acolythes, who in choirs make their artless bow, and then give each other the kiss of peace. In the beautiful poem of Friedolin, by Schiller, the page is represented stopping on his way to enter a church, where he finds a priest going to the altar, and there being no acolythe arrived, he instantly offers himself, and serves the mass. This was the first employment of each day for numbers of young men living in towns in every rank of society, from the highest to the lowest. The amiable and learned Rollin, rector of the University of Paris, was the son of a cutler, and already exercising his father's trade as his apprentice, when a good Benedictine monk of the Blancsmauteaux, whose mass he was in habits of serving, observed his happy dispositions, and obtained a subscription which enabled him to commence his studies in the college of Duplessis. What St. Bonaventura has written on the duty and happiness of those young men who serve at mass, in which holy function they are associated in the occupation of angels, in which they represent the assembled faithful, in which they have the honour of waiting on the minister of Jesus Christ, and the inestimable advantage of having an especial part in his memento, will convey an idea of

the sanctification and joy which were reserved for the innocent zeal of youth*.

Here it may be well to make a short digression, for the purpose of observing how these customs and rules of discipline respecting the young, ordained in the society of Christians, recommend themselves to the natural reason and piety of men; the judgment and dictates of which, emanating from that implicit faith in Divine Providence which St. Thomas ascribes to many of the Gentiles†, ought not to be disdained or rejected merely because we must be at the trouble of disengaging them from the detestable errors and corruptions of Paganism, which had misapplied and perverted them. This is a distinction, the justice of which no one who has had any moderate degree of instruction will contest, and therefore I pass at once to establish the truth of our proposition.

The Athenian, in Plato, lays it down as a maxim, that no one has received a sufficient education, who is ἀχόρευτον; and that whoever has been initiated, as it were, in the choir, in music, and gracious movements of the body, is sufficiently educated; which may be taken to shew the necessity of educating the external senses, or rather of the soul being imbued with that Divine harmony which will even impel the body, by prescribed movements, to exercise its external homage. Scipio Africanus, who vanquished Hannibal, and all the power of Carthage, and who was so devout that he never began any public or private affair of consequence, without first consulting heaven and imploring its assistance, had, from his early youth, according to the report of St. Augustin, been educated in the temples. If, for a moment, we turn our eyes from the dark side of the ancient philosophy, and consider only the testimonies which

* S. Bonavent. de Reformat. Hominis exterior. Cap. x.

† II. 2. q. 2. Art. 7.

it bore to truth, we may be permitted to contemplate with a certain pleasure the following passage in the tragedy of *Io*, where Euripides has represented, in a most gracious form, the ideal of youth devoted to the service of heaven. The innocent boy comes forth from the temple, and says, "Now shines upon the earth the bright chariot drawn by the four horses of the sun ; the stars fly from this fire of heaven into the sacred night ; and the insurmountable cliffs of Parnassus being lighted up, receive the lustre for mortals. The smoke of the dry myrrh now flies to the roof of Apollo : but as for me, I go to discharge the labours which I have undergone continually from a child, with branches of laurel to sweep the sacred pavement of Apollo's temple, and with my arrows to drive away the little birds which might injure it. Beautiful is the labour, O Apollo, to serve in thy house, in reverence of the prophetic seat : glorious the task to minister with my hands to gods, to the immortals and not to mortal men. Never shall I be weary in performing such well-reported labours ; for Apollo is to me a father, and I will praise him, who nurtures me. O Pæon, Pæon, mayest thou be happy, happy son of Latona. But I cease this labour of the laurel branches, and now from golden vessels I scatter the pure wave which gushes from Castalian spring. O that I may never cease thus ministering to Apollo, or ceasing, may it be for a happy end. Ah ! see, now the winged tribe are leaving the cliffs of Parnassus. Dare not to approach this cornice, or these golden roofs. I will overtake thee with my arrows, O thou herald of Jupiter, thou that excellest in thy talons the strength of birds. Here comes the swan, too, rowing towards the temple. Will you not, then, move elsewhere that purple foot of thine ? The lyre of Apollo which accompanies thy song will not be able to save thee from my arrows. Turn thy wings, then, and seek the pools of Delos. If thou disobeyest

me, thou wilt ensanguine thy melodious chants. See, see, what new bird is this which comes near? Is it about to deposit sticks and straw as a nest for its young ones under the sheltering cornice? The flight of my arrows shall keep you at a distance. Will you not be persuaded? Go and rear your children on the banks of the Alpheus, or in the Isthmian grove, that the temple and precincts of Apollo may not be injured. I fear to kill you, you who are the messenger of gods to men, but I labour in the service which I owe to Apollo, and I will not cease ministering to those that feed me*." In this brilliant picture, we see, that even under the deplorable errors of Pagan superstition, human reason was able to recognise the beauty of devoting the youthful heart to what is Divine, and of employing little inoffensive hands to minister in the service of heaven. In the passage following, we may observe how it could inculcate the happiness resulting from such a condition. When Xuthus claims his son Io from the priests, and desires him to leave the temple of Apollo, in which he has spent his first youth as the servant of the god, after encouraging him with the prospect of the wealth and honours which await him in the magnificent Athens, observing what passes in the mind of the youth, he breaks off suddenly, and says, "Are you silent? Why do you turn your eyes upon the ground and seem absorbed in care, as if sadness were to succeed your late joy?" And Io replies, by saying, that things when near do not appear in the same form as when seen from afar; that he foresees many difficulties, dangers, and certain evils, which will arise to him at Athens; and then he continues, "But you will answer, perhaps, and urge that riches can compensate for all this; but I do not love to hear those empty speakers who can hold their happiness

* Io, 102 155—180.

in their hands, and have no labour. May there be to me only a moderate supply of what is necessary to preserve me from suffering the pains of want. But, O my father, as to the good things which I enjoy in this temple, hear me speak. In the first place, I have that dearest blessing, leisure from being importuned by men, and at the same time a moderate degree of society. No evil person ever drives me from the way involving me in the intolerable calamity of having to yield to the base : but I spend my days in prayer to the gods, or in ministering joyfully to those of mortals who rejoice. And some arrive and some depart, and it is sweet to be new to those that are themselves new ; and besides this, what should be the object of all men's prayers, the law of this place and nature both conspire to present me in innocence to the Deity. Considering these things, O my Father, I esteem it better for me to be here than to remove thither. Suffer me, therefore, to enjoy my condition, for it is not more grateful to rejoice in great things than to possess those that are moderate with sweetness *." His conclusion resembles that of Joas with Racine,

This temple is my country ; I know no other.

But to return to the ages of faith, those really golden ages which combined every thing that the imagination of man could conceive of beauty with all that is pure, and holy, and Christian. The discipline and institutions for the young, with respect to studies and learning, will be a subject for our consideration in a future place. It only remains, for the present, to notice the circumstance often presented in ages of faith, so affecting to all who are not perfectly rooted in the love of eternal things, because in their view the misconceptions of sense necessarily repre-

* Io, 590.

sent it invested with a certain melancholy,—of the complete detachment of the youthful heart from creatures, not from vile disdain, but through the love and foretaste of higher good. The annals of the middle age can furnish many such instances, combined too with wild and romantic imagery, in which the youth, whom but for a short date the world possesses, has already emancipated himself from the attractions of this earthly life, and thereby become fully convinced of its nothingness, so that “ he prevails on himself to engage in its concerns only on account of the connection between those concerns and the one permanent eternal principle which religion lays open to him.” And in this placid resignation of the young, this mild angelic constancy which allows grief and pain, amidst the hard labours and sufferings of their lonely way, to wear only the garb of tenderness, this inherent love which has not time to put forth more than blossoms, there is a certain poetic tone of sadness and of joy, a certain plaintive sweetness of ideal humanity, which is gazed upon with an intense interest by such persons as are capable of discovering those more exquisite tones which, both in the natural and intellectual world, are always the most unobtrusive and subdued. This is one of the many tender mysteries to be found in the writings connected with ages of faith.

“ How often,” exclaims the unknown writer of the Manual ascribed to St. Augustin, “ how often, when a youth, have I said without thinking that it was also the sentiment of a Christian soul : How this world is burdensome to me ! What I behold makes me sorrowful ; the conversation which I hear on all sides on such mere vanities as the good things of this life, inspire me with a profound disgust. O sweet felicity to behold the saints, to be with the saints, to be oneself a saint, to enjoy the presence of God, to possess God for all eternity ! ” “ Behold a

boy," says St. Jerome, "instructed in all the honest arts of the world, having riches and dignity, who despising all that he possessed, hath gone to inhabit, as a paradise, an island in the midst of a dangerous sea, whose rough cliffs and naked rocks and solitude are sufficient to inspire terror! There, alone, nay not alone, for Christ is his companion, he beholds the glory of God, which the Apostles themselves beheld not, excepting in the desert. He sees no towered cities; his limbs are clothed in hideous sackcloth: around the island rages continually an insane sea, which re-echoes through the caverns of the hollow shore; no blade of grass grows there, no shrubs cast any shade; steep rocks enclose it as a prison. He, secure, intrepid and armed with the Apostle, hears God while he reads of things divine, speaks with God while he prays to him, and perhaps, like St. John, beholds somewhat while remaining on the island."

In the middle ages there is repeated allusion to saintly youths, pure and innocent in life and every virtuous lore, who wander in poverty, or tend a flock upon the wild mountains, till by accident they are discovered by some holy man, who finds them possessing souls that are like temples in which divine and ineffable mysteries are celebrated. Will you hearken to an old chronicler, who does as one that weeps and tells his tale? Arnulph was a child of God, a native of Lotharingia, and of a most innocent and holy life; as yet a youth, faithfully serving God in fear and justice, growing more and more to perfection, like the palm which increases daily, like the lily which sends forth a sweet odour, he grew up a plant destined for the celestial courts. But as by the Divine grace he disposed himself to shine as a light in the house of God, to give light to all that entered it, he applied himself to the studies which were necessary. Already he began to cast beams which were lighted by divine love, when hearing what the

Apostle says, that as long as we are in the body we are travelling from God, that we walk by faith and not by sight, and that we have not here a remaining city, but that we seek one to come: he understood this life to be a journey, not his country; a prison of captivity, and not a hall of freedom; a state of banishment, and not the kingdom of supernal habitation. So the good youth undertook a journey beyond the Moselle into Celtic Gaul, for the sake of praying and of frequenting the suffrages of the saints there. What business he discharged in that country, what commerce he had with them, what pious tears and holy sighs accompanied his prayers, it is not necessary to say, since it is sufficiently obvious that what he holily proposed, he efficaciously fulfilled: and now, with innocent hands and guileless tongue and pure heart, because he had not applied his soul to vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour, he was on his way returning, and approaching a city called Agen. What were his holy thoughts, his innocent little hopes, his beautiful meditations, as he walked along at that moment, are known to God and to his angel; to himself they were broken off, for lo he is suddenly attacked by robbers, who dart from the wood, beaten, and torn with cruel stripes. At length, with difficulty, he crawled to the village called Grueria, and there the devout people took care of him, and the matrons contended with each other who should receive him into her house like a son; but he told them, with a sweet and placid look, that his last hour was come, and that he was about to be presented to the mercy of God. “Subvenite potius ut subveniat vobis Deus:—Procure a priest, that I may receive from his hands the Eucharist of our Lord’s communion.” The priest arrived, and administered to him. “A traveller,” says the youth, “you see me, a stranger and traveller in this place, and therefore, on this road of my pilgrimage bury

me." Then raising his hands and eyes, he said, " O Lord Jesu Christ, who hast made and redeemed my soul, I deliver it up and commend it to thee, that it may be numbered among the elect souls of thy redemption." So he died, and the people buried him by the side of the royal road, that his grave might be seen by those that passed along, and during a long period his name was forgotten, and it was only pointed out as the grave of a certain faithful stranger : but in the year 971 the body was translated *.

What shall I add to this example of youthful humility which so ingeniously sought to be in the grave a monitor, καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πνέσθαι, of the vanity of all earthly good, of all human hopes, of every thing that is not God? That the tomb in which he was about to lay his innocent limbs might be an object to remind the future wanderer that all his journeys and pilgrimages, all his recollections of different places, of beauteous temples, and of the shrines of saints, all his sweet hopes of enjoying the day of return, and even his seemingly devout prospects of shining as a light in the Holy Church, would be to no purpose if they did not spring from higher sources than the mere curiosity of man, and the desire of the eyes and the secret pride of life; to remind him that in such provision there would be nothing substantial, nothing durable; that, as even the ancient poet sang, " Delight may increase with mortals for a short time, but then it falls to the ground, overthrown by unfortunate counsel. Men are of one day. What is any one? What is no one? Men are the dream of a shadow!"

ἐπάμεροι, τί δὲ τίς, τί δ' οὐτίς;
σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωποι †.

* Chronicon Mosomense apud Dacher. Spicileg. Tom. VII. p. 628.

† Pyth. Od. VIII.

Let us pass on then, without further delay, though we could say with Homer, that "a desire arises of weeping;" let us pass on, lest we should seem willing to grow old in meditating on the state of youth. "Do you not perceive," says St. Jerome, "how you have been a child, a boy, a youth, a man of robust age, and how you are now already an old man? We die daily; we are changed daily. This moment which I occupy in writing is so much taken from my life: we write, and we write again in answer, letters pass the sea, and ships plough the deep, and with each tide of age our moments are diminished. We have gained nothing but what we can appropriate to ourselves by the love of Christ*." It is enough. We have seen how eminently the young in ages of faith were poor in spirit: nothing remains but to wish devoutly that we too may be children of that beatitude, and that as the Church sings in the anthem at Lauds on Palm Sunday, "*Cum angelis et pueris fideles inveniamur, triumphatori mortis clamantes: Hosanna in excelsis.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

THUS far we appear to have overlooked the close of the divine sentence from the Mount, which pronounced of the poor in spirit that theirs is the kingdom of heaven, that is, the fulfilment of all the hopes and aspirations of the heart of man; the accomplishment of the end for which he was created; and though by incident we have already seen in each

* Epist. XXXV.

detail how a sweet and blessed end was theirs, whether we regard them in their capacity of the poor, whose external condition corresponded with that spirit, or of the great and noble, who studied humility, of the learned who retained it, or of the young in whose nature it seemed inherent, it yet remains to direct our thoughts formally to the many and great sources of felicity which appertained to all, even in the present life, the sphere to which these enquiries are confined, in consequence of their moral dispossession and spiritual poverty; and this must be the subject of our last meditation in reference to the beatitude which is the first in order.

“Felicity,” say the masters of divine wisdom, “is the ultimate end of man, and for which all other things are ordained in their due course*.” On this point there is no dispute, but, as Dante says,

“ All indistinctly apprehend a bliss
On which the soul may rest ; the hearts of all
Yearn after it ; and to that wished bourn
All therefore strive to tend †.”

But before eternal truth had spoken to the wearied spirits of men, who would have sought for it under the yoke of servitude, and dereliction, and poverty ! Plato indeed had attempted to shew, by painful reasoning, that the most virtuous life was the sweetest life ‡. True, indeed, he says admirable things on this head. “ It is necessary then to praise the most excellent life, τὸν κάλλιστον βίον, not only because in its form it surpasses all others in point of honour, but also because it excels in this, which all seek, τῷ χαίρειν πλείω, ἐλάττω δὲ λυπεῖσθαι παρὰ τὸν βίον ἅπαντα §.” And again, in the Platonic dialogue it is said, that “ whoever lives a holy life must be happy

* Diego de Stella on the Contempt of the World, Part III. 508.

† Purg. XVII.

‡ De Legibus, II.

§ Id. Lib. V.

either below or above ἢ κάτω ἢ ἄνω εὐδαιμονεῖν σε δεῖ, βεβιωκότα εὐσεβῶς*.” But how many forms might be conceived of that excellent life which would have involved men in misery while they looked for happiness? In Plato, therefore, there is nothing save the statement of an abstract proposition, and the real secret is no where in his writings found. Pindar, too, says that “if any mortal should possess in his mind the way of truth, he must needs obtain happiness from the blessed gods†.” But how far his conception of happiness was capable of satisfying the immense desires of the human soul may be inferred from what he says in the same ode, “It is necessary to seek from the gods things suitable to mortal minds, knowing, with regard to the present, of what nature we are. O my soul, do not aspire after an immortal life, but apply to the labours for which you are qualified.”

I know, indeed, that it would be as vain for the tongue to attempt to describe, as it would be impossible for the uninitiated heart to conceive that afflation of eternal bliss which is granted to the lowly spirits of those who bear the twelve precious fruits; but it may be allowable to contemplate, as from a distance, the indications of its possession in men during the ages of faith, and with submissive eyes to trace some of the visible and external sources through which it would seem that this water of life was made to flow into their souls. The indications of its existence present themselves in whatever way we bend our steps through the history of Christian ages. The instance which first suggests itself to the memory will render useless any particular research. Thus St. Francis Xavier, whose first cry was “Still more, O Lord, still more, amplius, Domine, amplius,” when with a prophetic eye he contemplated the sufferings

* Axiochus.

† Pyth. Od. III.

which awaited him, and wished them to be still greater, was heard to exclaim in after life, as when he walked in the gardens of the College of St. Paul at Goa, "It is enough, O Lord, it is enough, satis est, Domine, satis est;" alluding to the celestial consolations which were vouchsafed him in such abundance, that he felt as if he could not endure them long*. St. Thomas says, that no words can express the happiness of such souls, even in this world†. It remains only to exclaim with the great poet—

————— O born in happy hour!
Thou, to whom grace vouchsafes, or ere thy close
Of fleshly warfare, to behold the thrones
Of that eternal triumph!

When Angelran, abbot of the monastery of St. Richarius, was sick and confined to his bed with paralysis, he used at times to evince singular joy; and when people would ask him the cause why he appeared so elevated, he used to reply, that he derived this delight from the joys of the heavenly angels and from the perpetual felicity of the saints‡.

Dante attempts to express this upon meeting with the spirit of Cacciaguida in Paradise, to whom he says,

"Through so many streams with joy
My soul is fill'd, that gladness wells from it §."

This felicity, where it was not raised into extacies, diffused a perpetual sunshine over the conversation and manners of men, for sweet love inspired by holy thoughts must always apparel her in smiles. "Can the good and evil be distinguished by any sign?"

* Vie de S. François Xav. I. 281.

† III. Part ix. 79. Art. 1.

‡ Chronic. Centulensis, Lib. IV. cap. ii. apud Dacher. Spicileg. Tom. IV.

§ XVI.

asks the disciple in a dialogue ascribed to St. Anselm : " They can," is the reply ; " for the just, at peace in their conscience, and full of future hope, are cheerful in countenance, their eyes indicating a certain grace, modest in their walk, and sweet in their words, which spring from the abundance of their heart : but the evil, from a bad conscience and bitterness of heart, are cloudy in countenance and unstable in words and deeds ; immoderate in laughter as in sadness ; irregular in all their motions, and they pour out the venom of their hearts in bitter and impure speeches *." Thus Dante speaks of those that " harbouring in the light supreme, brought from thence a virtue that, sparkling in their eyes, denoted joy." How well this agreed with the good that is inherent in nature may be inferred from that beautiful answer which is recorded by the ancients of a certain wise old man, who, on being asked what he found the chief result of having become blind, replied, " *Puero ut uno esset comitator †.*"

" Our young students," says the father-guardian of a Franciscan convent, at La Fleche, " must evince externally the odoriferous fruit of rejoicing and of celestial consolations ; for there is nothing more agreeable in a soul, which professes piety and desires to lead a spiritual and angelic life, than to display, in all its actions, the smiling and joyous face of an angel. I never deem it a good sign when I see a novice who puts on the dismal air, and follows the fantasy of his young brain ; he should obey those who have charge of his conduct, and learn to be gay and joyous in God, during the time of honest and holy recreation. St. Francis recommended his brethren to have always a cheerful air, and never to give way to sadness, which is a murderer of the soul and body. In our seraphic order, numberless examples

* II. Cap. xix.

† Cicero, Tuscul. V. 39.

may be produced. It is said of St. Bonaventura, that he was cheerful and full of consolations for himself as well as for others, and that his address was so engaging, and his countenance so joyous, that he inspired every one with confidence to approach him, and that no one ever departed from him dissatisfied. God had implanted such a degree of love in the heart, and such sweetness on the tongue of this favoured creature *."

This is what that good father says ; but the same remark is suggested in almost every book which relates to ancient manners. Thus, the conversation of Madame de Chantal, the blessed foundress of the order of the Visitation, is described as being so cheerful and full of sweetness, that even people of the world were enchanted to find themselves in her company † ; and the Church reads in her office on the feast of St. Romuald, abbot of Camaldoli, that amidst all the penance, and austerity, and tears of that holy man, he used to be always so full of joy in countenance, that he made the beholders cheerful. Indeed, the spiritual writers generally agree with the opinion expressed by St. Theresa, that, in a vast majority of instances, melancholy is only the result of pride.

In the middle ages, a poem, or other book of religious instruction, was always called the joyous book. Thus the author of the *Calendrier des Bergeres*, which was printed in 1499, says,—

Hommes morts, qui desirez sçavoir
Comment on peut en ce monde bien vivre
Et mal laisser ; approchez, venez voir
Pour visiter ce present joieulx livre
A tous estats bonne doctrine il livre ‡.

* Le sacré Mont d'Olivet, par F. Elzeare l'Archer, 276.

† Marsollier, Tom. II. 35.

‡ Gouget, *Bibliothèque Française*, Tom. X. 200.

In attempting now to trace the particular sources which were employed to produce this happy state of mind, and commencing with its lowest indications, as in this cheerfulness, freedom, and even playfulness of manner, to which there is such frequent allusion, it may be shewn that here the immediate cause in operation was humility, and the total absence of all that stoical affectation of gravity, which loves to be distinguished from the vulgar, by its severe and unchanging tone. The gravest theologian would have agreed with Octavien de Saint-Gelais, where he says, in one of his poems,—

Bien licite est à l'homme humain
Après devote contemplation
Soy occuper à prendre soir et main,
Au monde aucune recreation *.

Piety, in this sense, seemed to make old men young again, and to realize what is said in the Platonic dialogue of those whom Jupiter and Apollo love, that they never come to the threshold of old age. Humility is thus a source of joyful inspiration; it is humility which gives joy to youth, which makes it quick to learn and graceful to practise. Grown men are too proud to gather the sweet flowers of nature,—too proud to stoop for them. The proud are slaves to the tyranny of the world's opinion and the world's custom, and therefore can have no peace or joy within themselves; but, as Plato said, “The souls of those who imbibe the divine draught, like iron in the fire, are rendered soft, and as it were young again; so that they became plastic and docile as when they were young, under the hand of him that would now form them to goodness †.”

Is it not admirable to observe how, in this instance, the reason of Plato agreed with the Divine

* Gouget, Tom. X. 232.

† De Legibus, Lib. II.

wisdom, which declared that men must become like children, in order to obtain beatitude? Were examples to be produced of the gaiety of men in these ages, so innocent and from the heart, there are formal pedants who would turn away in disdain; yet even the most refined taste need not prescribe silence on this head, for Virgil, in his heroic rhapsody, introduces the ludicrous misadventure of Menoetes and the laughter of the spectators, yet without loss of dignity and grace*, and real piety would assuredly take no offence. When Dante, who well understood its spirit, enters into conversation with Cacciaguida, upon subjects which had no connection with what is sacred, he only intimates the change by saying, that Beatrice, who represented heavenly wisdom, stood at a little distance,—

And Beatrice, that a little space
Was sever'd, smiled †.

Our ancestors seem to have delighted in contrasts, in order to relieve, or, perhaps, rather to increase and deepen the solemnity of the august and awful objects with which they loved to be surrounded. The exterior of churches exhibited strange grotesque monsters, and even the borders of their books of hours were decorated with figures expressive of so playful and delicate an imagination, that one would have thought “not even the inward shaping of the brain had colours fine enough to trace such folds.” From the brief but piercing glance which they cast upon nature, it seemed to them as if there could almost be detected something corresponding to this principle in the works of the Divine Architect; and even in their contemplation of the most solemn mysteries of faith, affecting and tremendous as they felt them to be, still they evinced a certain smiling

* Lib. V. 180.

† Paradise, XV.

astonishment, in looking into the skill that fashioned the events of this lower world, with such effectual working, and in beholding the triumph of the eternal counsels; there was with them, as with the spirits which Dante saw in Paradise, "mirth," or as it is expressed in the XXth Canto, "gamesome mirth," not for the fault, which on these occasions did not come to mind, "but for the virtue, whose overruling sway and providence had wrought thus quaintly *." Moreover they delighted in poems and paintings, and eccentric fabling, which exhibited the human and sportive side of the gravest subject. Such was the *Fabliau*, entitled *La Bataille de Charnage et de Carême*, in which these ideal personages are represented as kings summoning their vassals and engaging in dreadful combat. *Carême*, armed *cap-à-pie*, advances, riding on a mullet, carrying a cheese for his shield, his cuirass is a ray, his spurs are a fish bone, and his sword a broad sole; his munitions of war are peas, chesnuts, butter, cheese, milk, and dry fruits. *Charnage* has his helmet of a vast *pâté* of wild boar, with a peacock for his crest, a bird's bill serves him for spurs, and he rides on a stag, whose horns are loaded with larks. *Carême* is defeated, and only escapes on terms, that he is never to appear excepting during the forty days of Lent, and two days every week, and thus Lent becomes vassal to Carnage. The scholastic mock procession of whipping out Lent may be remembered as another instance. Here the triumph consisted in one boy being able to tread upon the herring, which was dragged by the next who ran before him, who used, in turn, his efforts to save it.

Being void of all hypocrisy and conscious of innocence, the good men of these simple ages could enjoy a little playful raillery directed against themselves. Of this an instance may be witnessed in

* Canto IX.

the Fabliau of the Battle of the Wines, in which one look from the chaplain was enough to disconcert those of Argence, Rennes, and Chambeli. Indeed, it is obvious that the ludicrous pastimes of the Abbé de Malgouverne and the Abbot of Fools could be to none more amusing than to those who had been most thoroughly imbued with the love of order. From the same cause arose that distinctive feature of their conversation and writings; in one respect, full of meek reverence, and in another, fearless, and frank, and jocund, producing an effect which resembled more the Socratic irony than any thing which we can find amidst the universal chill of pedantry which prevails among the moderns; and an attentive analysis of its nature would of itself point out the source from whence it sprung. Horace speaks of irony as a declining to use one's strength, and an extenuation*; it is an unwillingness to push the victory, and to shew the immensity of one's possessions. Hence Aristotle says, that ironical persons are of more gracious manners than other men. Irony with him is an ἑλλειψις, as opposed to the hyperbole and the μεσότης. It is a manner of understating what we believe, either from a profound sense of the inadequacy of language to express it, or from having so perfect a conviction of its truth, that we rest satisfied with our own interior conviction. Hence we see how naturally this style became characteristic of those who had the greatest faith, and who, in the spirit of humility, cherished the noblest sentiments; and that, on the other hand, the hyperbole, the style that is continually prolonged in tedious announcement of the immensity of one's conceptions, would have been significant of the very opposite character.

In allusion to the former, St. Theresa says, "The

* Sat. I. 10. 13.

graces and light which the soul enjoys pass without noise, and in such great tranquillity, that it often reminds me of the construction of the temple which was built by Solomon without one blow of a hammer being heard*.” This is not the case with the progress of those minds which are continually proclaiming their internal operations. Within those precincts, the noise of alteration and repair never ceases, but we should wait in vain with the hopes of seeing the temple. An instance illustrative of the two different styles of expression, may be shewn from one of those romantic descriptions of ancient manners, in which Sir Walter Scott represents the pedantic puritan as shocked at the playful language of her prisoner, queen Mary, in speaking to her page and to her women. I allude to that passage where the poor queen, oppressed with the gloomy silence of the Lady of Lochleven, turning round to them, observes, “ that if the latter should have adjusted her dress amiss, or if Roland Græme should have missed a wild duck on the wing, and broke a quarrel-pane of glass in the turret window, as chanced to him a week before, now was the time to think on their sins and to repent of them :” upon which the Lady of Lochleven, after assuring her that she speaks with all reverence, says, with great solemnity, “ Madam, methinks your followers might find fitter subject for repentance than the trifles you mention, and so mention, once more, I crave your pardon, as if you jested with sin and repentance both.” The language of Mary in this passage affords an example of the precise irony of which we speak, instances of which might even be produced from some of the most sublime writings of saints. The delightful account which St. Theresa gives of her various foundations in Spain, is not without them. Sir Thomas More continued his irony to the scaffold,

* The Castle of the Soul, VIIth Dwelling.

and we are presented with the same character in the accounts which have reached us of the death of some of the first blessed martyrs.

Frederick Schlegel makes some beautiful observations on this subject: "We also find," he says, "in the classical works of antiquity, at a time when that depth of a loving sentiment was not so generally revealed, this same phenomenon amidst the highest spiritual clearness and serenity, in the most charming attire of exquisite language. I mean that characteristic irony which belonged to the discourses and instructions of Socrates, as exhibited in the Platonic writings. For what else is that scientific irony of thought, and of the highest knowledge in the Socratic or Platonic sense, but the secret contradiction of conscience and thought brought to a harmony, and become clear to the soul in its inmost striving after the highest object? I must here, however, observe that this word, in the modern usage, has sunk to a degree lower than its original meaning; insomuch, that it now only signifies common mockery," and certainly does not fulfil Aristotle's idea, when he says that it makes manners more gracious; "but in that original Socratic sense," continues Schlegel, "as it appears developed in the Platonic works, and in the whole of their inward structure, irony signifies nothing else but this astonishment of the thinking spirit at itself, which it expresses by a gentle laughter: but besides this deeply involved sense, this laughter of the spirit has also another still higher signification, that of the most exalted earnestness, concealed under the smiling surface *;" an instance of which may be remembered in Livy, where he relates the reply of Hannibal to those who expressed their astonishment at his laughter, on beholding their despair for the calamity of their common country.

* Philosophie der Sprache.

It may be remarked here, that Lactantius seems not to have understood the loving irony of Socrates, reproaching him for it harshly, as if he had been a mere buffoon *. Better informed or more judicious was the scholastic theologian of the middle ages, who says of Socrates, alluding to his irony, "that in this respect he was a dissembler, non solum absque vitio, sed etiam cum laude †." Indeed, this theologian has shewn that there are various instances of its usage in the holy Scriptures ‡. "True irony," says Frederick Schlegel, "is the irony of love. It arises out of the sentiment of a finite state, and of its own real limits, out of the visible contradiction between this sentiment and that feeling of eternity which is essentially included in true love §." "How great," he says, "is the difference between the two kinds of irony in the conversational works of philosophy, between its mode and form in the Socratic school and in the writings of the moderns, where endless doubt in the highest extravagance of the sceptical sagacity, is held fast as the ultimate object, so that this cruel and bitter irony rests upon this general system of denial and negation, presenting such a contrast to that good-natured and loving irony of the Platonicians, inwardly associated with the highest inspiration for the divinity of truth, and become one with it, or at least inseparable from it, while it proceeds from the feeling of its own incapacity to comprehend and express in words the fulness of that divinity, as far as the soul is conscious of it.

These observations may be applied with the strictest truth to distinguish the joyous simplicity which characterised the lighter compositions of Christians, in

* Lib. III. de Falsa Sapientia, Cap. xix.

† Melchior Canus de Locis Theologicis, Lib. II. Cap. iv.

‡ Ibid. Lib. II. Cap. ii.

§ Philosophie der Sprache, 63.

ages of faith, from the heartless pleasantry of our more recent literature.

While we are tracing the development of the lowly principle in the diffusion of these minor graces, it may be well to remark the absence of that restless anxiety to be thought the constant and intimate associate of the great, which keeps so many proud minds in perpetual agitation. This wretched and deplorable weakness was counteracted by humility. There is a beautiful instance of the contrary spirit in one of the books of St. Theresa, where, endeavouring to frame a comparison from things of earth to illustrate her heavenly theme, she says, "Imagine that you enter the cabinet of a great king, filled with a number of rare and precious objects, and containing a number of mirrors, that can be all seen at one view, as it happened once to me, when, on my travels, obedience obliged me to visit the Duchess of Alba, and to remain with her for two days. I was surprised on beholding such a vast number of curiosities, and I am now very glad that I saw them, as it will serve me for the present subject*." Nothing is trifling which belongs to the possession of peace and simplicity, and few persons can have been so wanting in observation as not to be capable of feeling the charm of such a passage as this. But if humility could thus give to the conversation and external manners of men a cheerful smiling grace, which harmonised with a bright and innocent spirit, it was still more conducive to happiness, by delivering them from that ambition, more or less concealed, of being regarded as the most worthy and learned and skilful, which is so often the torment of ingenious but proud minds. What peace must have accompanied the genius of one who could leave such a sentence as this in the works which had secured

* The Castle of the Soul, Vith Dwelling.

immortal renown. St. Theresa writes as follows in the beginning of her *Treatise on Prayer*. “I do not see what I can add to what I have already written, and I fear lest what I shall now say, in obedience to the commands imposed upon me, will be only a tedious repetition—for I am like the birds that are taught to speak, and which, through want of sense, repeat always the same words. I cannot, without confusion and tears, think that I write for persons who are capable of giving me instruction; and herein I see clearly that it is the power of obedience which constrains me to write. God grant that you may derive utility from it: and I conjure you to beg of him to pardon the miserable creature who thus dares to undertake it*.” A mind like this was not in danger of being disturbed by finding the productions of others preferred before its own. A great spiritual writer makes the following remarks, which will shew not only what tranquillity belonged to the humble scholar, but also what facilities for advancement in every noble pursuit were imparted by poverty of spirit. “How many persons,” he observes, “are deceived here! They will risk nothing for fear of losing the reputation they may have gained of ability and wisdom. Hence they renounce a thousand holy enterprises. They would rather do nothing all their life, than do moderately what they do: they abandon their labours, lest they should labour without success! Whereas, they who are really humble, forgetting themselves, apply with diligence to many objects to which they may often feel their talents unequal—for they argue thus with their own minds, ‘I shall at least gain humiliation, if I gain nothing else:’ and in the end, God permits the very contrary; for while others languish in a criminal idleness, and after immense preparation

* The Castle of the Soul, Chap. i.

remain in obscurity, these men, who seek humiliation, are crowned with success which they never contemplated*. Quintilian counts it among the virtues of a grammarian, "*aliqua nescire* †;" and our profound and feeling ancestors, in extending the confession to every science and branch of knowledge, as well as of moral discipline, with particular reference to themselves individually, while they often verified the truth of what was said by the holy recluse, "*Plus profecit in relinquendo omnia, quam in studendo subtilia*," were also delivered from many perturbations and miseries, which become the torment of those who seek to be noted in the annals of fame. Even the heathen Epictetus had prescribed something that resembled this exercise of humility; for his advice was thus expressed—"If any one should say to you, this man accuses you of such and such things, do not try to refute what is said, but answer, he is ignorant of my other vices, or he would not have confined his accusation of me to that point ‡." This was cutting off vexation by the roots. "The humble," says the holy recluse, "are in peace, because they stand in God, and not in the world and its opinion." That the profession, or even the actual possession of a more exact knowledge, even of a multitude of those accessory reasons which may be drawn from the depths of philosophy in support of faith, would have contributed but little to their happiness, may be inferred from the indignant question of the poet in reference to the modern philosophers, who are conscious of no deficiency in science :—

————— Shall men for whom our age
Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,
To explore the world without and world within,
Be joyless as the blind § ?

* Le P. Judde Œuvres Spirituelles, Tom. IV. p. 172.

† Lib. I. 9.

‡ Manuale, Cap. xxx.

§ Wordsworth.

But who can describe that profound and calm felicity of a humble, passive spirit, which was able to draw refreshment and sublime inspiration from the very objects that pride would have converted into gall and bitterness! This was secured to men, in ages of faith, by the lessons of religion—for these proceeded at once effectually to extirpate all the roots of an unhappy life to their most minute fibres, by imparting that general temper and disposition which was exercised in receiving the gifts of God, whether conveyed in the way of instruction or of the Divine mysteries, without cavil, criticism, or prejudice; and herein lay the great secret of attaining to that happiness which was first forfeited to the human race by the presumption that dared to question the will of its Creator: All graces and all beatitude were attached to this repose and humiliation of mind. Thus St. Bonaventura said—"Speak willingly of God, and willingly hear those who speak of him; but avoid all contestation on the subject, and hear peaceably whatever good thing is said, without opposing any thing of your own, and be not like those who are never content to hear without contradicting and disputing, from a fear lest they should be thought less knowing than those with whom they are*." The same humility preserved men from being cast down by the sense of their own misery in the occasional experience of blasphemous fancies and thoughts, which they were told to chase away as flies, without even grieving for them; and in this manner there was peace to men of good will. This was what Albertus Magnus recommended†. To the poor in spirit belonged a blessedness which flowed from a source that was pure and unfailing, because it did not consist in any proud possession of their

* De Reformat. Hominis Exter. Cap. xxx.

† De adhærendo Deo, Cap. ii.

own, but in the consciousness of their constant dependance upon God, and in keeping themselves "within the Divine will, by which their wills with his were one." St. Augustin asks, "What is it to be happy?" Many, he replies, have spoken much respecting it in many works; but what need have we to apply to many works and to many authors, when the holy Scriptures tell us in two words, and with truth, that happy are the people who have the Lord for their God*. This fear, which made men submit to his sovereign authority, corresponds to the first beatitude; for, as St. Augustin says, "*Timor Dei congruit humilibus.*" God, as their King, made their law his will; "and in his will was their tranquillity." He was their fear and their love. "The earth," says the Père Judde, "is a paradise to whoever seeks only to please God; but, on the contrary, it is an anticipated hell to the man who rejects his invitations†." Of St. John, the precursor of our Lord, his holy mother said, that he rejoiced in gladness. "This," says Father Diego de Stella, "is the difference that exists between good and evil men's joys: these do joy in their vanities and the other do rejoice in a good conscience before God. This is the rejoicing of St. John in joy‡." Albert the Great makes divine reflections on this head. "Nothing," he says, "can be happier than to place all things in Him, in whom there is no deficiency. Therefore, with all study, diligence, and labour, simplify your heart, that you may be converted from phantasms, immoveable and tranquil, and that you may stand always within yourself in the Lord, as if your soul were in that now of eternity, that is, of divinity. If you continually and truly revolve these things within your mind, they will confer more upon you towards

* Epist. ad Prob.

† Retraite Spirituelle, I.

‡ On the Contempt of the World, I. 116.

a happy life than all riches, delights, honours, nay, and besides, than all the wisdom and knowledge of this deceitful life and corruptible world, even though in these things you were to excel all the men that ever existed *.” St. Augustin, speaking of men converted to God, says that they lose the things which they loved before; “*et donec fiat in illis amor æternorum non nulla mœstitia sauciantur †.*” But where that love enters, the loss is remembered with additional joy and thankfulness; for in order to approach their primal source, it was necessary that they should part with the weights with which other men do vainly load their feet, toiling in hopes of happiness, which even the wise ancients knew could never be derived from such things: as Cicero, when he says of Antony, “he was happy, if there can be any happiness in such a mind ‡.” They had thought to find peace and gladness in the love of creatures; and in them even Cicero could exclaim, “O how many and how bitter are the roots of sorrow §.” And now from these they are delivered by embracing poverty of spirit, which expects and finds light out of darkness, and, amidst privation, food on which they live, and never know satiety. That joy which might spring from natural sources, was exalted and secured to them by being sanctified; for they learned to offer the expansion of their hearts to God as well as to their earthly friend, and they looked up to him in their mirth and playful hours, as well as in times of serious meditation; for even in the lowest things they saw, as Dante says,

————— The printed steps
Of that eternal worth, which is the end
Whither the line is drawn ||.

* De adhærendo Deo, Cap. v.

† Lib. I. de Serm. Dom. in Monte.

‡ Phil. II. § Tuscul. Lib. III. 83.

|| Parad. I.

In this respect the Church had taught them very differently from what is held by some writers of systems in our age; for even an acquaintance with her ritual had imparted that benignity which Cardinal Bona describes as being “a certain sweetness of mind, excluding all anger, envy, and malice, dressing the whole soul to benevolence, tolerance, and internal joy*.” The office for lauds breathes joy and humanity, expansion of heart, and the simplicity of innocence. At the view of its gracious forms one is tempted to ask “*quæ est ista quæ progreditur quasi Aurora consurgens †?*” To the humble, again, belonged the happiness resulting from that rule of faith which they received with such gratitude from the Church of God; and “it is a pleasure incomparable,” as a great English philosopher says, “for the mind of man to be settled, landed, and fortified in the certainty of truth.” All other blissful gifts fall short in comparison of this, which is no sooner received than the soul finds rest and joy in the tabernacle of the living God, and like the dove which Noah let fly from the ark after the deluge to see if it had subsided, she brings back a branch of olive to signify that she has found some firm ground amidst the waves and tempests of the world.

Theirs was also in an eminent degree that delight of communion which is not weakened by the number of the happy to which Dante alludes in the lines,

O man! why place thy heart where there doth need
Exclusion of participants in good ‡!

St. Bernard applies to the proud the prophecy, “*Erraverunt in solitudine in inaquosa*;—for the proud,” says he, “wander in solitude because they

* De Divina Psalmodia, 301.

† Cant. VI. 9.

‡ Purg. XIV.

wish to be alone and singular in all things, to be either more noble, or more prudent, or more learned, or better than all others. Such was the Pharisee, Deus, gratias ago tibi, quia non sum sicut cæteri hominum." St. Bernard adds, "gratias agit, non quia bonus, sed quia solus," O, how unlike the mind of those who are children of the first beatitude. "To cast it to the dogs! What a humiliating comparison!" Yet the woman of Cana was touched by it. "True Lord!" she replied; she was a Pagan, and she humbled herself; she was a Pagan, and through poverty of spirit, resigning all the prejudices of her nation and family, she procured for herself the riches of Divine peace.

St. Theresa, in relating the foundation of the monastery of Carmelites, at Alba of Tormez, mentions that the father and mother of the foundress, Theresa of Lays, being of a very ancient nobility but not rich, had taken up their residence in the village of Tordilla, which is two leagues distant from Alba, upon which she makes this observation, "I cannot, without compassion, remark how great is that vanity which rather than stoop to the least thing from what it names honour, can induce persons to retire thus to places where they are deprived of the instructions which may contribute to their salvation." Such a life was then uncommon; for humility caused men to avail themselves of the numerous and gracious provisions which the Church had made for the edification and happiness of her children: and of this we may still witness proofs in the situation of the ancient houses of the nobility, which are seldom far distant from the places of greatest devotional attraction. It is not only, however, in order to partake of the great and supernatural consolations derived from the ineffable mysteries of the Catholic Church that such a spirit is absolutely indispensable; but it may be said in general, that all the natural rewards of

virtue are the fruit of a disposition which approaches to that Christian humbleness or poverty of spirit which submits to the discipline of virtue with a cheerful and child-like obedience. This seems to have been present to the mind of Socrates when he said, "It is necessary to understand that in each of us there are two ruling and leading ideas, one or other of which we follow, the one a desire of pleasure, the other an implanted sentiment, desiring whatever is best. There are times when these two agree in harmony, and times when they are in opposition to each other, and at mutual war; one time this conquers, and at another that: when the sentiment which desires whatever is best gains the ascendancy, then temperance rules; but when we are ruled by the desire which irrationally draws us on to pleasure, then follows the reign of insult, and insult has many names, for it has many members and many forms*." Then, as Drexelius says, "even cupidities themselves are clamorous against each other, and opposed in combat; and there are continually in the mind, as if legions and armies of foul and bitter thoughts†." This answers to the condition of the proud, whereas the state of harmony corresponds with what St. Bonaventura describes, saying, "all that the soul of man can desire must have relation to these three things, either to what we believe is agreeable, or to what we think honourable, or to what we suppose is useful, and all these characters of good are found united only in spiritual delights‡," which belong only to the humble. To the same effect speaks a modern philosopher, who in his last work, written but a short time before his death, seems to have expressed the sentiments of a Catholic Christian,

* Plato, Phædrus.

† De Conformitate, &c. Lib. III. 2.

‡ De Sept. Grad. Vit. Spiritual. Cap. lxxv.

“The divine origin of our religion,” he says, “is marked no less by its history than its harmony with the principles of our nature. Obedience to its precepts not only prepares for a better state of existence in another world, but is likewise calculated to make us happy here. We are constantly taught to renounce sensual pleasure and selfish gratification, to forget our body and sensible organs, to associate our pleasures with mind, and to fix our affections upon the great ideal generalization of intelligence in the one Supreme Being*.” In this passage the philosopher does but express in modern phrase the sum of what was taught by the ascetical writers of the middle age, respecting the prominent part which humility, obedience, and self-renouncement should play in the operations of religion. But the effects of such a disposition of the soul become still more apparent as we ascend the scale of felicity, and endeavour to trace the causes and operation of those extraordinary raptures which refreshed and animated the holy men of these faithful ages. “God,” said they, “ordains that our hopes should arise from our very poverty and weakness; as the Church sings on the eve of St. John, *Ex utero senectutis et sterili Johannes natus est præcursor Domini.*” The prophecy which said “thy light shall arise in darkness †,” was fulfilled in their souls; and, as brother Elzeare l’Archer observed, in allusion to its lustre, “the stars never appear brighter than in the middle of the darkest night.” Assuredly what during these intervals they saw, as Dante says,

Was not for words to speak, nor memory’s self
To stand against such outrage on her skill.

But, on the other hand, they felt the necessity of or-

* Sir Humphrey Davy, the Last Days of a Philosopher, 218.

† Isaiah lviii.

daining that these raptures of devotion should be of short duration, "because," said St. Macaire, the Egyptian, "if man were to remain continually in them, he could no longer discharge the ministry of the Word nor accomplish his other duties, nor hear the Word of God, nor even attend when it would be indispensable to his own conservation. It would be necessary for him to remain seated in some retired spot where he would have no other occupation but to taste the sweetness of these transports. Therefore God has not wished that this high degree of perfection should be more frequent, in order that man might accomplish his duties and his destinies on the earth*." Not merely was poverty of spirit conversant with these happy intervals, but it taught men to appreciate the advantages of being left without them, and even the danger of desiring to enjoy them. "O humility, humility," cries St. Theresa, "I can never believe that they possess thee who seek consolations and raptures in prayer†." Here it is impossible not to be struck with the wide distinction between the minds of men in the ages of faith and that of those modern professors of piety who seem to consider as an undisputed point that it consists in the ardent desire of spiritual enjoyment and in the horror of all interior pain and of all poverty of spirit, not in the renouncement of private possessions, but in what the blessed John of the Cross calls "spiritual gluttony‡," being desirous rather of their interior pleasures than of purity of heart and true devotion; or, as the holy recluse of the thirteenth century says, "following Jesus to the breaking of the bread but not to drinking the cup of his passion." "Whereas true piety," says John of the Cross, "seeks what is insipid, suffering deprivation of all

* Hom. VIII.

† The Castle of the Soul, Chap. i.

‡ The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Lib. II. c. vii.

things for the love of God, dryness and affliction. For to seek only consolations and interior transports is to seek oneself and not Jesus Christ. It is the will of God that the faithful soul should experience intervals of dereliction, that it should suffer these interior desolations which, so far from being contrary, are favourable to perfection, when endured with the Catholic spirit of sacrifice. Our Saviour was deprived of all interior consolations when he spoke those affecting words. I wish, therefore, to persuade those who apply to the interior life, that the ways which conduct us to God, do not consist in our feeling great transports, but in renouncing ourselves, and being ready to take from God's hands both dereliction and joy*."

St. Bonaventura, speaking of the two descriptions of men, those whom grace comes to meet, inflaming their will with fervour, and crowning them with constant peace and joy, and those who are left without sensible consolations, though ever ready to say with the prophet, "Lord, my soul desires nothing but to be inflamed with the love of thy law," observing, that the former are more happy than the latter, adds, "Who can decide which has the most merit? Both may arrive at the highest point of perfection; only let the latter beware how they murmur in passing the desert of this life†." At the transfiguration, Peter, James, and John, were admitted to behold Christ, but Andrew was excluded. So again at the reviving of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, these three were let in, and Andrew shut out. Lastly, in the agony, the aforesaid three were called to be witnesses thereof, and still Andrew left behind. Yet he was St. Peter's brother, and an apostle. Fuller, who makes the remark, confesses, in his

* B. John of the Cross, Ascent of Mount Carmel, II. 7.

† De Reformat. Hom. exter.

quaint, profane style, that he seems more offended at this than Andrew himself was, whom he finds to express no discontent. In the trials of the spiritual life, such ordinations have a specific end. Thus we read of the internal agitations of St. Theresa, in that cruel moment when she was constrained by her director, fearing the scandal and calumnies of the world, to refrain from those pious exercises which had become her only joy, after generously sacrificing to God all that had been dear to her, at the moment when Jesus Christ, to reward such efforts, allowed her to experience the most lively transports in the operations of grace, she was obliged to renounce them, and thus was left between heaven and earth, without an object, and without support, the most sensible, and the most tender heart that ever existed*. St. Bonaventura, however, says, "The state of apparent dereliction, in which the soul is left without spiritual refreshment, is highly useful, in order that our faith may rest more upon the authority of the holy Scriptures than upon our own experience; and thus our faith has more merit, and hope becomes more illustrious†." "When the soul experiences these extraordinary operations," says John of the Cross, "it often conceives a secret self-esteem, and imagines that it has already some merit before God. Such is the fruit of these sensible delights, which are supposed to be spiritual‡." "Quid præclarius est, quam vera spiritualis paupertas? atqui cum ea nobis proponitur, nolumus eam!" We must have interior consolations§." Coming, like Hercules, to the temple, and growing impatient and furious because we do not receive an instant answer from heaven||; because we

* Villefore, Vie de S. [T. Tom. I. p. 80.

† De Sept. Grad. Vit. Spiritual. Cap. v.

‡ The Ascent of Mount Carmel, II. xi.

§ Theologia Germanica, Cap. x.

|| Pausanias, Cap. xiii.

are not immediately exalted to that state of animal enthusiasm which we mistake for piety. Thus the moderns turn away from the assemblies of the faithful as if never satisfied, according to the confession of a celebrated German philosopher, who speaks of his having entered a Catholic church. The reason is obvious. It is because the passions, the movement of which they mistake for zeal, are not excited ; it is because there is nothing to nourish the secret pride, which is the atmosphere essential to the continued existence of that species of piety so falsely deemed spiritual, merely because it has no influence upon the conduct of life ; it is because, on the contrary, there is every thing to humble them, and to remind them of their own nothingness, and to mortify vanities and impatience. The blessed John of the Cross makes sublime reflections on this head in his book on the obscure Night of the Soul. " God often refuses," he says, " this taste of sweetness, in order that the soul may regard him more purely with the eyes of faith. Men wish to feel God, and to taste him in the participation of the holy mysteries, and in other spiritual exercises, as if he were capable of being taken and touched in a material and sensible manner. All that is certainly very imperfect, and opposed to the nature and perfections of God, who demands from us a very simple and pure faith.—They follow the same method in prayer—thinking that, to be good, it ought to inundate the heart with a flood of sensible consolations. Accordingly, they fatigue their imagination and weary their head, to obtain these interior delights ; and because they do not succeed, they are in trouble, and they think that they have lost their time. Thus they lose true devotion, which consists in perseverance in prayer, in humility, in distrust of self, and in the sole desire of pleasing God. Such souls have great need of passing through the obscure night of the soul, in which it

is stript of every possession." At present, as Louis de Blois says, "even when they appear to serve God, it is only their internal consolations that they seek : they serve themselves ; and thus in every thing, and at all times, they prefer their own will to that of God. They make holiness consist in the sweetness of their consolations, rather than in the mortification of the senses and the destruction of vice. Whereas, these sensible tastes are often nothing more than the simple movements of nature, and far from being really a true spiritual affection : they produce a secret pride, a self-satisfaction, and a fatal security, a disposition also to judge others, and to believe themselves holy : they are pursued exactly as any other terrestrial pleasure, and they pass with them. Thus vanish away in their own thoughts those who seek sensible graces rather than the Author of grace *. In another book he speaks as follows. "Some imagine themselves lost when they are deprived of sensible consolations, and when they are restored to them, they fancy themselves to be saints : but herein they deceive themselves—for dryness of heart is often better for man than sweet refreshment. Sweetness is sometimes granted to those who, living ill, are far separated from God ; and therefore it is no infallible index of sanctity. It is even an imperfection to pray for it—for the gifts of God are not God himself—and therefore we must not rest in them. We should be willing to be led through the shadow of death, and the darkness even of hell, not alarmed at being deprived of the sweets of sensible devotion, but only anxious to be always united to God with an intellectual love, and a right will, and finding in his good pleasure our supreme consolation †." All this is expressed by Dante in a most sublime figure, where he

* Guide Spirituelle, Chap. ii.

† Louis de Blois, Institution Spirituelle, Chap. vii.

represents Beatrice at first smiling upon him, and casting forth beams from her celestial eyes; but when he ascends with her to the seventh heaven, where are the souls of those who had passed their life in holy retirement and contemplation, his near approach to the perfection of that splendour is indicated by relating that Beatrice then wore no smile, and that all was silent: and when he humbly asks the reason,—

Mortal art thou in hearing as in sight,
Was the reply. And what forbade the smile
Of Beatrice, interrupts our song *.

Either would have overcome him; but still the ascent to that perfect state was accompanied with a diminution of sensible delight.

This may seem to have been a long digression; but it was very important to mark the doctrine on this point of the ages of faith, because, as we shall have occasion hereafter to observe, it will account for a number of characteristic traits in ancient institutions and rules of life, which have been lost and reversed in later times, and which are even an offence to the followers of the new religions: if, indeed, any thing be new which relates to the errors of men.

It remains, in the last place, to speak of the consolations belonging to the poor in spirit, which more immediately had regard to the sorrows and calamities of life. “*Pauper et humilis spiritu, in multitudine pacis conversantur,*” says the holy recluse. It is a trite sentence in the schools, “*Nulla regula sine exceptione;*” but the rule of submitting humbly to the divine will, which opened a source of unfailing tranquillity, was known to be without any exception. St. Bernard comments upon this truth, and says, “Hear the man whom God found to be after his

own heart." "Paratum cor meum, Deus," he says, "paratum cor meum:" prepared for adversity, prepared for prosperity, prepared for being humbled, prepared for being exalted, prepared for all things that thou prescribest. Dost thou wish to make me a herd of sheep? Dost thou wish to constitute me a king over the people? Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum. Lo, I am ready—let him do with me according to his good pleasure. Admirable was this abdication of his own will. For what, if God should say, 'I do not wish that you should be a king, I do not wish that you should live.' 'I am ready,' replies David: if God should say, 'I wish you to be a second time an exile, a second time a fugitive, and to have a most wicked son, who will seek both the crown and the life of his father.' 'Yet still, I am ready,' cries David. If God command, saying, 'I wish you to be again in the dens of wild beasts, again to live by begging alms, and daily to incur danger of death,'—'Nevertheless, I am ready,' says David. If God should say, 'I wish, instead of consolation, that you should be cut off from all that were subject and dear to you, to be sought after in order to be stoned, to be devoted to all dire calamities,'—'Yet I do not decline this,' says David. Dominus faciat quod bonum est coram se." So ready was he to sacrifice freedom, children, riches, kingdom, and even life, rather than not please God, rather than not say, "Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum*."

Hieremias Drexelius, the Jesuit, wrote a divine book, never to be sufficiently praised, entitled, "De Conformitate Humanæ Voluntatis cum Divinâ," which will explain the consolations in affliction, which belonged to the poor in spirit, in the present world of trial. The philosopher whose work, as be-

ing written with the sentiments of a Catholic, has been already quoted, had evidently made this discovery for himself, and probably was indebted for it to his residence in that capital of the Christian world, whose stores of learning and sacred wisdom are seldom lost upon men of noble capacity. "Religion," he says, "has always the same beneficial influence on the mind. In youth, in health, and prosperity, it awakens feelings of gratitude and sublime love, and purifies at the same time that it exalts; but it is in misfortune, in sickness, in age, that its effects are most truly and beneficially felt, when submission in faith, and humble trust in the Divine will, from duties become pleasures, undecaying sources of consolation; then it creates powers which were believed to be extinct, and gives a freshness to the mind, which was supposed to have passed away for ever, but which is now renovated as an immortal hope." To which sudden and mysterious change, if it were allowable to compare things divine with human, we might say that some weak resemblance can be traced in the mere natural feelings which many persons must have experienced, when, in days of heaviness and desertion, in the dark and cheerless sky of winter, the eye, at eve or morning, discovered some fair and lovely tint painted in an adverse cloud,—some sweet or glorious lustre appearing faintly beyond it, and instantly the mind remembered some trait or feeling of happy days gone by,—some aspiration of youth,—some rapture of friendship,—some sweet fancy of innocence and memory was changed into hope, and the heart seemed relieved from some long oppressive load, which had sunk it down, and the face was once more lighted up with a smile of joy. But it is time to close this first retrospect, whose humble theme relates to the ways and thoughts of the spiritually poor. It only remains to observe in conclusion, that to this poverty of spirit were

obliged to come in search of content and peace, not merely the saintly men, whose desires from the first aimed at perfection, but even those mighty heroes, who had wrought so many a deed to merit earthly glory, and, as Homer says, inextinguishable fame. To them, at length, seemed especially to sound the words—"Aufer cydarem, tolle coronam, sede in pulvere*." And it was not for those who had already felt the bitterness of pride to remain deaf to the voice which breaks the cedars. Behold, then, the knightly limbs prostrate, the swords, the crowns, and banners laid at the steps of the altar. No more haughty state, no more esteem of themselves, no more desire of honour. What! and did these deign at last to approach the mountain? Did they discover too, that their happiness was there? Yes, and with the deeper sense of conviction, as they had so long tasted by experience the reverse; for, "all our peace in this miserable life is derived rather from suffering humbly, than from not experiencing contrary things," and this remark of the holy recluses is peculiarly true of men who possess the most delicate and susceptible minds. It is only in poverty of spirit that they can find support against the scorns and ills of life, and rest for their wishes. Without that rest to visit in time their afflicted hearts, shattered by the world's tempests, they must succumb amidst unutterable and incurable woe, a sorrow that is irresistible, and even, as Homer truly says, deathless. Well does the poet represent them, in describing Tasso:—

— from my very birth
 My soul was drunk with love, which did pervade
 And mingle with whate'er I saw on earth;
 Of objects all inanimate I made

* Ezek. xxi. 26. and Isa. xlviii. 1

Idols, and out of wild and lonely flowers,
 And rocks, whereby they grew, a paradise,
 Where I did lay me down, within the shade
 Of waving trees, and dreamed uncounted hours;
 Though I was chid for wandering, and the wise
 Shook their white aged heads o'er me, and said,
 Of such materials wretched men were made,
 And such a truant boy would end in woe,
 And that the only lesson was a blow*.

They judged rightly; for they took not into account the resources of faith, and they saw that, in a world of incurable disorder, so intense a love of what is beautiful and perfect, must needs of natural necessity bring with it disappointment and the keen bitter sense of discord, and the cruel pangs of having to witness, and perhaps endure the triumph of injustice and wrong. Had they, indeed, looked upwards and conceived the charm of that substance of things not seen; had they remembered the offers of eternal truth, to give rest to the wearied spirits that would follow him who was meek and lowly of heart, that end of woe would not have seemed inevitably awaiting the object of their solicitude. For O! what a balm has the Catholic religion provided for these eagle spirits, when confined in the net of earthly calamity! Its effects may be witnessed by referring to the words which the same poet ascribes to Tasso, where he represents him afterwards in the dungeon, saying,—

I once was quick in feeling,—that is o'er;
 My scars are callous, or I should have dashed
 My brain against these bars, as the sun flashed
 In mockery through them.

He once was quick in feeling. How much is expressed in these few words! Could we behold a heart thus delicate and susceptible, Ah me! what wounds would it display, recent and old, as if inflicted by

* Byron, Lament of Tasso.

those flames which had already begun to prey upon it ; tormented, as if by demons, whose instruments are every brief and vile contingency ! But he adds, " that is over." In fact, all is changed, all is reversed : he is no longer what he was. No one can now tear the impatient answer from his tongue, no indication of neglect, no cruel injustice, no merciless wrong, can any more trouble that heart ; for it has found rest and peace unutterable, peace everlasting. That rest has been found by entering upon the way of the holy cross ; he has been taught how to endure, how to sanctify sorrow. Objects have been made familiar to him, before which he loves to kneel and weep in lowly reverence. The passion of his Saviour, the crown of thorns, the drink of vinegar and gall,—these have taught him what he could never have gained from all the consolations of philosophy,—these

Have from the sea of ill-love saved his bark,
And on the coast secured it of the right ;

teaching him to estimate the value of being condemned to suffer bitterness, and yielding him in return, for that proud and lofty spirit which he renounced, the power of preserving his peace while beholding man's unkindness ; the power of reducing to a sweet calm that once restless and troubled sea of the heart, swollen and agitated with a thousand passions ; nay, even the faculty of converting pain and misfortune, and the dire events of a calamitous life, into images of quiet beauty, on which the memory and imagination may dwell, almost with a poetic fondness ; for now he can say with Lovelace, that

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage,
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage ;

or apply to himself what Richard Plantagenet says of Mortimer :—

In prison hast thou spent a pilgrimage,
And like a hermit overpass'd thy days *.

Who would exchange this privilege, which requires nothing from those who desire to possess it, but a humble and patient spirit, for the anguish and disappointments that inevitably await the proud, who disdain to suffer, still impenitent though scourged? Who would barter it for those intellectual acquirements which only aggravate the distress of their self-tormented possessors, whom we behold so often like the spirits in Dante, which “hung on the wild thorn of the wretched shade?” Who would not wish to have known, from the first moment of life, this great divine secret, proclaimed, indeed, from the Mount, and yet to many still a hidden mystery? Then youth would have been gentle as the breath of spring, and age as gifted as the sweet luxuriant season when the powers of nature exhale a living balm for every sense; then, as each once proud follower of earthly glory might exclaim with Dante,

Devoutly joy, ineffable as these,
Had from the first, and long time since been mine †.

SUCH then was the character of ages of faith in the middle time of history, with regard to the disposition proposed in the first of these divine sentences from the Mount, which teach the means of attaining to

* Hen. VI. I. ii. 5.

† Purg. XXIX.

celestial beatitude. The examples which have been given are drawn from histories and other works which date from that period, and the reflections and comments, which express the belief and sentiment, are, for the most part, either those of authors, whose writings were received as law from a more remote antiquity, or those of men who lived during the time, and who are known to have exerted a most extensive influence in directing the thoughts and conduct, not only of men individually, but even of entire nations : or, in fine, they have been drawn from the verses of that great Christian poet of the middle ages, whose mind was so thoroughly imbued with the theology of the school, and with the sentiments that prevailed among all ranks of the people, and who is always so precise and accurate in his expressions of them, that wherever the peculiar prejudices of an unhappy political party do not break out, his sublime and wondrous creation may be received in one sense as a view of the intellectual condition of mankind during the period in which he lived ; and here the genius of Cary had facilitated the task by supplying me with the thoughts already clothed in the English tongue as nearly as possible as they had been first conceived in the mind of the great master of mysterious song, who is assuredly not more admirable as a poet than as a kind of divine instructor to repeat the eternal truths of revelation to the forgetful and thoughtless race of men. These passages might have been multiplied to almost any limits, but to serve the purpose of a general outline, intended rather to suggest than to develope the meditation of others, there has been enough already offered, in giving the more important among the forms into which the leading principle was found to pass. In the ensuing books the reader will often have occasion to recur to what has been proposed in this place, in order to attain to a more clear conception of the subject on which he will then

be occupied, and in like manner the subjects to be hereafter considered, will continue still farther to illustrate and confirm the view which has been taken of the spirit and manners of Christian antiquity: so that I would recommend the postponement of objections until all has been seen: for the grace of the eight divisions has something common in genere, but specifically different for each beatitude; and, in fact, they are all so closely interwoven, that each must necessarily involve something which might have found admission, perhaps, with equal justice, under a different head; but it will be sufficient for all purpose of arrangement, if we keep the great leading features of each distinct within its proper and immediate limits. Therefore, without employing myself on every occasion to meet objections, and anticipate their solution, I shall continue to sit a silent spectator of the representation before us, and wait until the personages shall speak for themselves. The first development of the one original principle which has been proposed in an eight-fold division, has necessarily been less conversant with facts and the positive side of things, since its consequences, as its essence, were primarily and professedly spiritual, or at least foreign from our present conception of the material works of the mighty Creator of the universal frame, and wholly without the sphere of those tangible objects, which have been hitherto submitted to the perceptions of man; but in what is to come there will be occasion to approach much nearer to the present external and material world, for the development can only be attained by an exhibition of the impress made upon this earth, in the forms, manners, and institutions of society.

For the present, I must pause with an internal conviction that those whom I undertook to lead through this retrospect of past times, will have reason to repent their having consented to follow me;

they must feel wearied and disappointed ; but as the rude peasant who guides the pilgrim ventures at times to promise shortly a less steep and slippery path, so I presume to suggest here, that the ensuing books hold out a prospect less discouraging to one who has already had such experience of the weakness and incapacity of the stranger, who with no other recommendation but a good and cheerful will, has offered to lead him through these high and mysterious regions ; for besides that there will be so many material objects on every side to lay hold on, and grapple with, which will therefore render less necessary the qualifications of a spiritual order to which we can lay no claim, the view must be felt to possess more, perhaps, of a human interest, and almost one which is present and personal to us all in these times, when we behold the work of general destruction so fast proceeding under pretence of that new religious and revolutionary principle of reducing all things to what is supposed to be spirituality, though, in fact, it is synonymous with annihilation ; the principle which rests on the idea that there is nothing pure and divine but what is *ἀσωματώτατον*, to use the expression of Aristotle * : that, be it remembered, which was the great instrument in the hands of the ignorant innovators of the sixteenth century, and which seems to be prepared in the wise dispensation of the Supreme Ruler, as the grand solvent to be employed by their worthy, but far more acute successors in removing every thing which had been created by religion in ages of faith for the use and enjoyment of men, churches and states, cathedrals and abbeys, colleges, and institutions of mercy for the poor, thrones, degrees, and privileges, wisely and admirably contrived for the common benefit, sublime and joyous ceremonies, to be interwoven with the

* De Anima A.

whole order of social life, and the application of earthly and visible objects to promote spiritual and eternal good. However, although in what is now past, there may have been but little that was tangible to excite the attention of those who love curious research, still it may be conceived that there was a certain degree of interest even amidst a mere didactic exposition of doctrines and sentiments, which is not wholly without the province of those who contemplate the history of the ages of the race of men; for the facts and events which mark the different stages of the human course are intimately connected with the spirit, and, as it were, the system of philosophy of each period, and it is impossible to estimate these without taking a review of the doctrines publicly and generally taught, which can only be known by simply and patiently listening to what we find was delivered. In conclusion, we may be allowed to anticipate a reflection which will subsequently be often suggested, and to observe even from the little progress we have already made, how groundless is the surprise expressed by those, loving the ages of Christian antiquity, when they find them now by proud unbelieving men in such wondrous sort despised. The law of the moral world, we know, cannot be arrested, but fulfils itself without regard to any one's wishes. Human honour is yielded only to those who court it by corresponding thoughts and actions, and the world will love its own, and that exclusively. How, then, is it possible that it should admire and reward, with the vain honours of its applause, these simple and strangely superhuman ages when nothing was written or done for glory, but all in hopes of an invisible good, and of a future eternal recompense? To the eye of a proud earthy philosophy, there was nothing worthy of being described in elaborate histories, nothing to point the sentence of a splendid rhetoric, nothing to make men feel higher in their

own esteem, or to support any of the inventions by which so many at present hope to extinguish for ever the torch of faith, and almost to dethrone the Almighty, as far as respects his government, of that earth which he gave to the children of men. For if there was grandeur in these ages too evident to be contested, and greatness more than human to which the most sublime geniuses that ever moved in the intellectual system of man have paid homage, it was accompanied with such manifestations of the lowly idea, often to the eye of sense so trivial and ignoble in the form of its development, such symbols of humbleness and poverty of spirit, that independent of all ulterior designs of opposition, the sentiments of mere animal men are necessarily shocked rather than elevated at the remembrance; and the real glory—the glory worthy of an immortal being, created only to love and to adore—is overlooked in the humiliation of the cross. They who now profess such a regard for the appearance of material consistency under every circumstance, are highly offended at the contrasts presented in the institutions, manners, and character of the middle ages; but it should be remembered, that to them also the question of St. Fulgentius, which the Church reads in her office, would be a scandal if some of them were not themselves the type of inconsistency. “*Quis est iste Rex Judæorum?*” asks that holy bishop. “*Pauper et dives, humilis et sublimis, qui portatur ut parvulus, adoratur ut Deus.*” So was it with these ages, in conformity to their divine model; they were at the same time poor and rich, humble and sublime; below the standard of human glory, and marvellous in the manifestations of the power and majesty of God. As St. Leo says of the great mystery from which their whole spirit and form emanated, “they were in such a manner tempered, that all humility was comprised in their majesty, and all majesty in their

humility." But in the prevalence of the judgment which now condemns them, there is assuredly nothing that ought to seem strange to those who have attained to a real knowledge of their character. So far from it, if the case were otherwise, if it were taught that these were annals, the study of which would furnish ambitious men with the science of the world, and the multiplied arts of glory, they might reasonably fear that their whole view of the history of these ages had been mistaken ; for it is not within the mortal power to ordain against the law of highest God, that the heavenly crown should be reserved for those to whom the world has adjudged its own, and who by loftiness of spirit have secured a present recompense of gratitude and fame. Ages of faith are stigmatised as a period of darkness and barbarism ; no sign of hate is unemployed by those who mention them ; they are spoken of as presenting nothing but an universal blank, cheerless, disgraceful ; but it is either by men illiterate, who let out their ears for hire to declaiming sophists who adopt the strain of ridicule, chiefly because it is the easiest process to win the character of being acute and judicious, or fanatical who merely repeat one after another, though, indeed, with all the sincerity of their hearts, what they have been told by founders and propagators of sects who sought to justify their schism, by publishing abuse and scandal, or else it is by men of higher capacities, but who still to lowliness have been willing strangers, persons evidently under the domination of the world, and of the philosophy which soars not above its brief contingencies ; or else, what ought not to be forgotten, or spoken of in palliative terms, it is by men bound together in secret league against whatever is holy, whatever is divine, speaking in the language of that city which has so thriven in the warfare which the tongue dreads to designate, that we might almost apply to it the fearful words of the great poet, and

say, that its name spreads over hell ; men of undisguised impiety, guilty souls, that, if they change not, in the fire, must vanish. These are the teachers, who, from different motives, all agree in affirming that ages of faith were ages of folly, that piety was superstition, that contemplation was idleness, that humility was the extreme of degradation, that the world was in darkness, until the rise of modern philosophy, or as one who has written on the life of Philip Augustus says, " that heresy must be considered as the first cause of the march of the human mind *." And are humble Christians to be deceived by such clamours as these ? Are the bold assertions of such men to prevent the memory of the just from being in eternal remembrance ? When this cry of darkness is not too artless to merit reflection, ought it not rather, on any point, to lead the faithful to suspect the existence of spiritual light ? And where it may so easily be confronted, as in this instance, with the unquestionable evidence of ancient writers, whom we can behold teaching and acting without any regard to what judgment posterity would form of them, ought it not to be received as the unsuspecting testimony of enemies to the consoling truth of the existence, during that long period, of a race of men eminently Christian, eminently deserving of the scorn and hatred of the enemies of the cross and grace of Christ ; who, as true pilgrims and strangers on the earth, took no thought for leaving on it trophies of glory behind them, but only passed humbly on, as if in a solemn and continued procession, supporting and encouraging each other to persevere in following the royal road of the holy cross through a world which was not their home, through a world which they looked upon as a vale of tears, through a world which always stood aloof when it did not persecute,

* Tom. II. p. 278.

only scowling upon them in disdain and hatred, in the hopes of being able to reach in safety the portals of the celestial city, those gates through which had passed the King of Glory, and which were again to open, only to admit the humble and the poor? It will be time enough to prepare for joining in the accusations against them, when we shall find these supported by persons who unite in themselves the learning requisite to conduct an historical enquiry with the spirit and the sentiment, which are no less requisite to enable them to estimate rightly the result, and to know what they have really found—for it is not assuredly men who have relapsed to a heathen philosophy, who can respect or even comprehend, amidst the various institutions and manners of past ages, the humility of those who followed Christ. Meanwhile we are fully warranted in concluding from the whole, that these ages were, in an eminent degree, endowed with that poverty of spirit, which is so completely opposed to every form of the development of human pride. That they were ages of glory, in the heathen or revolutionary sense of the term, though they were ages of most singular heroism, may, indeed, be denied; that they were ages of any predominance of political dignity, in particular nations, according to the theories which have grown out of the extremely complicated relations of modern civilization, though the grandeur of their state is often admirable from its simplicity, may admit of question; that their philosophy did not admit of being clothed in that pompous and seductive language, with which sophists persuade society that it has advanced in general intelligence—though, as we shall have occasion to see hereafter, it was not on that account to be noted as deficient; finally, that their moral instructions were not recommended with eloquence, though they were endued with a power greater than all eloquence; that their

system of education was not calculated to make great men, in the worldly sense of the term, though it was eminently calculated to make the young gentle and engaging, and to bring back a primal age beautiful as gold ; all this may indeed be argued with more or less plausibility. That they were ages of humility, or of what the divine sentence terms poverty of spirit, in public and in private life, in the institutions of states, in philosophy, and in education, no one can deny who has regard to the facts of history and to the whole tone and tendency of the contemporaneous writings ; it was, in reality, the spirit of the times, the spirit which governed the lives of individuals, and which from thence extended its influence even over the affairs of nations : it was a spirit which on several occasions broke forth amidst the pomp and circumstance of royal courts ; it was seen in many instances on the thrones of the world, and repeatedly in the triumph no less apparently calculated to involve it in danger, of unrivalled genius, and of an acknowledged intellectual sovereignty.

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ERRATA :

Page 22, *for* "toil" *read* "coil."

25, *for* "tua" *read* "tu."

47, *for* "reverence" *read* "renounce."

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